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If You Don't Mind My Saying So. . . . . .

JOSEPH WOOD KRUTCH

There is a story (true, I hope) that back in the days when Lord Russell was only plain Mister he returned a very personal questionnaire from a professor at Western Reserve University with the following notation: "If this is a specimen of Western reserve, God protect me from Western impudence."

No one has ever shown much interest in my private life, not even in that now most publicized of privacies, my sex habits. To date I have never told anybody whether or not I have achieved "a mature and satisfactory sexual adjustment," and if I should ever be asked, I would probably reply that I am not sure I want what sounds a bit on the dull side.

On the other hand, I have been pestered for years by both private and form letters from so-called "researchers," one of whom sent me a list of two hundred American actors of the past and present with the modest request that I "arrange them in the order of my estimate of their relative artistry." About the same time I was visited by a so-called student from a New York institution of higher learning who asked me, with poised notebook, my "relation to contemporary literature," and then, after I had mumbled something-or-other, informed me with considerable enthusiasm that a collection of such opinions was to constitute his thesis, that it would be nice if I would sign his notes, and that perhaps when the collection was complete the *Nation* would like to buy it for publication. Shortly before that I had received from a Ph.D. candidate in a middle western university a request for a list of the most significant modern plays of all countries, accompanied by the charming admission that as he was writing a thesis on the subject, he would like to be told which works it would be most worth his while to read.

I was, I am proud to boast, less appalled by the calm effrontery of the demand and the apparent assumption that I would be only too glad to spend a few weeks compiling such a list than I was by the naïveté of the mind that could take it for granted that the proper way to investigate the significance of the modern drama was to read only the plays that someone else had decided to be significant.

About that time I wrote in the *Nation* an article called "Scholarship by Proxy," but it seems to have had little effect. The habit of writing doctoral theses that consist of a collection of the opinions and "evaluations" of other people seems to be growing, and I am afraid that my usual reply ("Why don't you do a little evaluating on your own?") produces no effect other than to convince the recipients that I am unwilling to assist the struggling scholar. "You say," I sometimes add, "that my eminence in some field or other will add great value to your work. I can assure you that this eminence (which of course I would be the last to question) was not achieved by asking other people their opinions concerning the subjects upon which I undertook to pontificate."

The method seems to be seeping down into the high school and even the elementary school. Fairly frequently I get carefully scrawled letters on ruled paper from children who usually confess that their

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teachers have put them up to it. They pose questions it would take a volume to answer. Typical are those that say something like: "I am told that you have written about Eugene O'Neill. Will you please give me your estimate of this writer and his importance." One (and I am not making this up) read: "I am told that you have criticized contemporary society. Please tell me what your ideas on this subject are."

There is now another development. Not long ago I said good-bye to the last (and I mean last, not latest) of five Tucson High School students sent by their instructors in journalism to interview me. Before the last of them had had a chance to open her mouth I challenged her by asking if she knew anything about me or had ever read a line that I had written. "Well," she replied, "I have the impression that you are a sculptor."

This young lady got a lecture to the effect that an interviewer was required to know something about the person interviewed. I know that this is a whopping lie. In fact, I had only recently been questioned over the telephone by a reporter who called to inquire about something I had said publicly concerning Dostoevski and who began with, "By the way, who *is* Dostoevski?" Still, he probably never took journalism in high school and those who have should have been instructed that they can hardly ask intelligent questions unless they know at least something about the occupation of the person they are interviewing.

If there are any readers of this department who are both persistent and blessed or cursed with a good memory they will be aware of the fact that it is sometimes composed of snippets. This will be one of those times. I have nothing more to say about Scholarship by Proxy and there is no use trying to find a connection between what I have just said and any of the things that follow. There isn't any. I now pass on to a discouraging fact—which might be a footnote to Mr. Robert Ardrey's *African Genesis*. The most intelligent animals are likely to be the most mischievous.

It is true that recent investigations seem to indicate that the dolphin is almost as benevolent as he was pictured in the ancient legends, but he is certainly an exception. Monkeys and goats are, of course, notorious, but the pet crow with which I have had considerable experience is also outstanding. He is clever as can be but he uses his cleverness most of the time to disrupt, destroy and tease with what seems a full realization of what he is doing. Instincts are wonderfully constructive and purposeful. But when an animal begins to use his head it is very likely to be for mischief. Neither crows nor monkeys are very good at making anything but they are wonderfully ingenious at unmaking. Maybe that is just because taking apart is easier. But they do seem to enjoy destruction for its own sake. One of the first seemingly conscious intentions of which animals are capable is malice, or at least mischief. And in man it seems to be still a very satisfying activity.

When arguing (as on more than one occasion I have) that there is such a thing as permanent human nature and when suggesting what I believe some of these permanent characteristics to be, I have added that most of them are reassuring. But possibly I should add that destructiveness and mischief are equally permanent characteristics.

One is most likely to become aware of such permanent and universal characteristics when observing them in a culture different from our own, and I had this experience during a recent short visit to Japan. As I read a few of the popular legends and saw a performance of some Kabuki plays, it struck me that the classic Japanese code seemed deliberately designed to produce the maximum number of dilemmas solvable only by murder or suicide—or preferably both. I later wondered if this was as odd as it seemed. Doesn't the history of human beliefs, customs, institutions and regulations suggest that making life difficult, dangerous, painful and full of anxieties has motivated a good many of them—including, of course, religious beliefs and practices? On what other basis can you possibly explain the popularity of the twin doctrines of predestination and eternal damnation? Isn't the

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need for self-torture one of the permanent characteristics of human nature?

I suppose that modern thought is still primarily Hobbesian in the assumption that the key to human behavior is the pursuit of power and pleasure. So far as power is concerned, that is probably true enough. That we consistently seek pleasure is doubtful. Willingness to sacrifice pleasure is pretty general, and a good many people seem to choose making somebody else unhappy over being happy themselves. Although some moralists accuse us of being "pleasure-mad," there is so much to be said on the other side that a recent book called *The Decline of Pleasure* makes its point. There are a great many things to which most people seem eager to sacrifice pleasure whether you call those things "power" or "status." Francis Bacon remarks that the happiness of the Great consists only in thinking how happy others must suppose them to be. That this fake felicity is what many, many people pursue suggests a deeper insight into human nature than the too superficial generalizations of Hobbes.

"How happens it that there are few men so well employed—so much to their mind—but that a little money or fame would buy them off from their present pursuits?" So asked Thoreau in his *Journal.* Doesn't it suggest that most people put happiness and contentment pretty far down on their list of the things they want?

Was Thoreau an "influential" writer? No American writer has influenced certain individuals more or the general trend of events less. Nearly every characteristic of our ideals and mores that Thoreau despised or ridiculed has been accentuated and elaborated since his time. As a minor example, consider this brief entry from his *Journal:*

> A party of schoolchildren had a picnic at the Esterbrooks Country the other day, and they carried bags of beans from their gymnasium to exercise with there. I cannot be interested in these extremely artificial amusements. The traveler is no longer a wayfarer, with his staff and pack and dusty coat. He is not a pilgrim, but he travels in a saloon, and carries dumbbells to exercise with in the intervals of his journey.

What would Thoreau think of the typical picnic party at the beach today, loaded down with sports equipment, poker chips, radios, phonographs and, most recently, portable television sets? Or of the traveler by air looking at a movie while he flies over Greenland?

Take this single sentence, also from his *Journal:* "If I am not I, who will be?" and compare it with the professed aims of our schools where from kindergarten on the child is urged to "adjust" to his age group, his peer group, the dominant interests of the passing day, and is often not even permitted to read a book that has not been certified as conforming to the common denominator of his companions?

Not long ago one of those "Inquiring Reporters" in San Francisco asked eight men and women, "Do you consider yourself average?" Every one of them answered "yes" and only one expressed anything less than complete satisfaction with this situation. "I don't consider myself above average. I don't want to be. I try to be as much like my fellow man as possible. A person has more friends that way." Or as a young lady who classifies herself somewhat strangely as "a student" puts it, "I feel that I have all the necessities. I have a car. I am going to college. I like being the way I am." Still another, "I like being average. This way I am one of the group. I wouldn't want to be above average because I wouldn't want to be outstanding." The one gentleman (he is in the Navy) who said that he was average but didn't like it nevertheless had this to add: "It is easier to get along with people if you are average. . . . My motto is: Conform to the people you are with."

What has become of the desire to be President? Don't these happily "normal" people want even to rise from rags to riches? Don't they even dream, as we readers of Horatio Alger used to dream, of rescuing the banker's daughter from a mad dog and then being adopted by her father as a protégé? Where did they acquire this dismal ideal of adjustment to the common denominator? To me it smacks dangerously of Communism. And that ought to give them pause.

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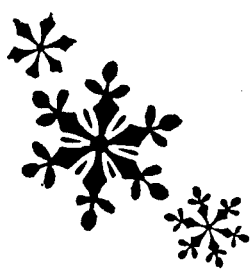
Ours is an age of a great many things beside anxiety. It is, for instance, the age when nearly everything is either FREE (of extra cost) or doesn't have to be paid for until some tomorrow so distant that it seems impossible it would ever come. And, of course, it is also the age when television commercials give more meaning than ever before to the dictum, "What is too silly to be said is sung." Yet for all that, everybody, even the melodious advertiser, is frustrated. He spends hundreds of thousands of dollars piping into every living room the lilting and exultant exclamation, "Tastes like fruit—fresh-picked fruit," and then is compelled by an unsympathetic government to label his package "imitation flavor." Probably this is another example of what Communists used to call "the inner contradictions of Capitalism." And maybe it does all just add up to anxiety and frustration. There is a thorn on every rose, a fly in every ointment, and a dark cloud in front of every silver lining.



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the scholar cornered

Is Contemporary History Real History?

When I was a student, I had the strong impression that the writing and teaching of contemporary history were not quite respectable. It was rumored that in Europe a full century had to pass before a subject was considered ripe for historical treatment, and that the whole period since the French Revolution fell into the suspect category of the contemporary. Even in my own country, I noticed, the college courses that were labelled "since" a given date, and hence presumably went right to the present, in fact stopped or petered out at least a decade before the year in which they were given. There always yawned a gap, of varying dimensions, between the date at which the formal study of history stopped and the onset of the individual age of reason when I had begun to read the current news with understanding. So far as I can tell, something of this situation still persists. I have found my students' knowledge at its vaguest on the period of their own childhood: Hitler today is scarcely more real than Attila the Hun. Since the recent past seems to the young just as alien as the remote past, I have concluded that there is no good reason for not treating it as equally historical, and I have labored to eliminate the gap of ignorance that so troubled my student years by bringing my own lectures abreast of the morning newspapers.

Yet still the doubts of an earlier day have never ceased bothering me. To many—perhaps to most—of my fellow-historians the history of one's own time is not "real" history. It suffers from certain irremediable insufficiencies that make it less than history—current events, perhaps, or even political science, but not history in the usual meaning of the term. These presumed insufficiencies—of documentation, of perspective and of detachment or "objectivity"—need to be examined with some care if I am to convince myself and others that all this time I have not been embarked on a fool's errand.

The most familiar charge levelled against contemporary history is that it cannot be written since we do not yet have "the documents." It would be foolish to deny the force of this reproach. The Soviet archives are closed to scholars and seem likely to remain so; how many other important repositories are under seal I would not care to estimate. No one will quarrel with the assertion that the historian who tries to write about the mid-twentieth century is laboring under handicaps he would not suffer if he were dealing with an earlier period.

I do not think, however, that this handicap is as great as it is commonly supposed to be. The stress on documentary insufficiency derives from a corresponding overestimation of the value of documents themselves. Obviously it is impossible to write most types of history without documentation to go on. But we should not ask too much of written sources. "No document," E. H. Carr in *What Is History?* reminds us, "can tell us more than what the author of the document thought—what he thought had happened, what he thought ought to happen or would happen, or perhaps only what he wanted others to think he thought, or even only what he himself thought he thought."

The cult of documents, like so much else in historical writing, can itself be explained historically. It goes back to the beginnings of systematic scholarship, when Catholic and

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Protestant divines tried to demolish each other's arguments by assailing the validity of old canonical texts, or discovering new ones, and it was reinforced in the first half of the nineteenth century when Leopold von Ranke based his seminar training on the systematic exploitation of documentary materials. Ranke's favorite sources were the *relazioni* of Venetian ambassadors—the wide-ranging reports of cool, experienced diplomats, surveying the international scene with the poise and skepticism befitting the representatives of a small state whose disproportionate influence reflected a cultivated finesse in manipulating the European balance of power. Such an attitude suited the temperament of a young historian sensitive to nuances of policy and character. Or perhaps the long-deceased Venetian ambassadors molded the historian's mind to conform to their own. *"Der Stoff brachte die Form mit sich"*—"the material imposed the form" of his history—Ranke unguardedly remarked, thereby admitting that he was allowing his sources to ride *him* rather than guiding *them* with a firm hand. Whatever the process, in the end there came to be a close fit between the historian and the materials with which he was working.

From this elective affinity derived a number of consequences of great importance to subsequent historical scholarship. First there was the tendency we have already observed to view events with the eyes of a statesman, simply taking for granted the great-power system and the diplomatic *status quo*. Along with it went the further assumption that war and diplomacy were the historian's main business—what Ranke called the primacy of foreign policy—which even in our own country won general acceptance, thereby provoking in reaction the contemporary tendency to begin with internal policy and to deal with foreign affairs as the outward reflection of internal struggles. Still more, the tidy and finite character of diplomatic dispatches persuaded historians that other types of documentation were equally manageable. The less reflective jumped to the conclusion that in every field of historical investigation there existed a body of documents as clearly delimited as these; they forgot that on certain subjects—as for administrative history—the documentation might be overwhelming in its mass and heterogeneity, while elsewhere it might be almost nonexistent. Above all, the cult of documents tended to discourage direct observation: diplomacy, as a closed and semisecret preserve, was almost the last place where the historian would have an opportunity to do his own field work. Here the Second World War had a most fortunate by-product. Quite a number of historians, both British and American, found themselves in foreign service, and the directness and reality of their writing on diplomatic history gained immeasurably by this wartime experience.

Even for past centuries, then, the historian's conventional assumption that there is such a thing as "the documents," readily identifiable and existing in finite quantity, breaks down on closer inspection. For our own era, it becomes a near absurdity. Since the invention of the typewriter and of the more modern and flashy forms of reproducing devices, the amount of administrative paper in circulation—of typed or dittoed or multilithed material that can lay claim to the dignity of official documentation—has passed all human bounds. At the other end of the scale, the habitual use of the long-distance telephone and the practice of airplane travel have effected an equally drastic reduction: when the great chat with each other over the transatlantic wire or go long journeys for a brief personal encounter, many of their most important exchanges may never be recorded. Gone are the days when a diplomat sitting at some distant post—conscious that he might not receive instructions for weeks or see his chief for years, and that his dispatches would necessarily be read under circumstances far different from those in which they were composed—was obliged to write with something of the historian's serenity and detachment. Today we have only the urgent message—or silence in the record. The result is a vast unevenness in what the historian has to work on, an *embarras de richesse* combined with and cancelled out by the most distressing lacunae. The neat

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coverage of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century documentation has quite vanished. In some respects, the historian of today is in the happiest situation his breed has ever enjoyed. (Yet in this too ample pasture the honest admit that they are reduced to selective grazing.) Elsewhere, the contemporary historian may be no better off than the medievalist struggling with an almost total documentary gap.

Let us agree, then—cheerfully rather than in despair—that for the mid-twentieth century there will never come a time when "the documents" are available. Yet this history must be written; the public demands it and has a right to demand it. If we do not do the job, others less qualified will undertake it for us. Nor is the idea of writing the history of one's own time as unconventional as certain of the manuals make it appear. Historians have always done it, even in the nineteenth century when the notion of its disreputability was first established. Still more, many of the works that we honor as the classics of our craft fall into this category. Of course, their authors wrote without adequate documentation; of course, their conclusions have been substantially corrected by subsequent scholarship. But these works still stand—at the very least as literature and as monuments of human observation.

Perhaps that is all that the writing of contemporary history can accomplish. Yet it is already a great deal. Short on documents, certain to be superseded in detail, the historian of his own time can still produce a work of art that will illuminate for posterity the perceptions and the illusions of his contemporaries. That this is no mean feat will become amply apparent when we turn to the deeper and more troubling questions of perspective and objectivity.

By now nearly all of us have accepted Croce's dictum that the writing of history necessarily changes with the standpoint of the historian, that *all* history is contemporary in the sense that its presentation reflects the circumstances and attitudes of those who write it. Each generation writes history anew. There is no such thing as a "definitive" work of historical scholarship. Or, more precisely, if there are a few books whose authority has gone unquestioned for more than a generation, it is because the events with which they deal have been temporarily removed from current controversy, and historians have heard no urgent call to take a new look at them.

From this standpoint, the second major count against contemporary history—that is, "contemporary" in the usual sense of the term—the charge that we do not as yet have sufficient perspective upon it, simply falls to the ground. It is true that some minimum of time (perhaps only a matter of months) must elapse before we consciously begin to sort out the great events from the small. But this process of evaluation has actually been taking place in our minds all along. (We knew at the time that the crisis over Cuba in the spring of 1961 was a big event; what we did not know was that it would be dwarfed by a greater Cuban crisis a year and a half later.) There is no set point at which contemporary polemics cease and historical judgment takes over; the two proceed simultaneously, in the remote past as in the present.

In any ultimate sense, the best (or the worst) that the passage of time can do to contemporary events is to make them appear smaller, to reduce their image in the mirror of eternity. But this fate may not befall them right away; a number of generations or even centuries may go by before historical minutiae that once seemed of supreme importance fall into irrelevancy. When I was a student, we pursued the history of the French Revolution in meticulous detail; we were fully informed about all the shifts of party allegiance and ideological statement that punctuated the 1790's. Today, a generation later, these matters tend to be dealt with in a more summary fashion. The reason, I think, is again a change in collective experience. My student years were the 1930's—an era of passionate ideological involvement, the decade that in retrospect looks like the Indian summer of ideology itself before the very concept was swallowed up in the amorphous blandness of contemporary political

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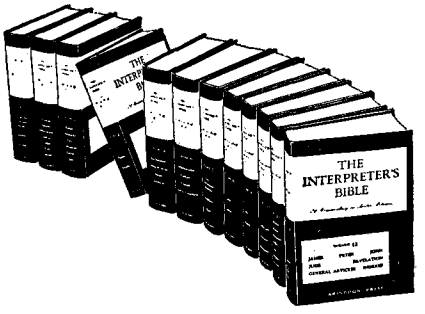

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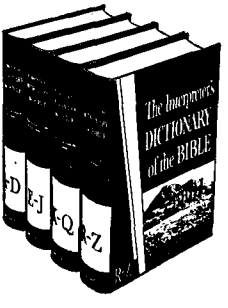

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exchange. Nowadays religion or social status may strike the students as more pressing matters for historical investigation, and old controversies that to my college generation seemed trivial and stale—like the points at issue between Luther and Calvin—may unexpectedly take on a burning urgency.

More closely regarded, then, the matter of historical perspective begins to blend with the third question and the most misunderstood of all, that of detachment or objectivity. To cite once more my student experience, I remember that at one time I really believed that the writer or teacher of history could and should attain to a sublime detachment. As the French put it, he should be above the *mêlée* of human events, delivering with sovereign confidence the "verdict of posterity." Since then, an intense exposure to the ideas of Benedetto Croce has cured me of such notions: I have learned that the result of the historian's efforts to be detached has usually been the very opposite of what anyone would call great history. It has been bloodless history, with no clear focus, arising from antiquarian curiosity rather than from deep personal concern, and shot through with metaphysical and moral assumptions that are all the more insidious for being artfully concealed.

This does not mean that I—and others like me—have learned from Croce to write partisan history with a good conscience. Far from it: we detest mere polemic, and we certainly know how to distinguish between fine historical writing and writing designed to serve a cause. We recognize that historians have been right in striving for serenity and the world-embracing view. But we understand this aspiration in rather a different sense from the way in which it used to be taught to us. What we have learned from Croce and his like is that "objectivity" is to be valued only if it is hard-won—only if it is the end result of a desperate *and conscious* battle to rise above partisan passion. The man who does not feel issues deeply cannot write great history about them. Unaware of his own prejudices, he cannot bring them to full consciousness and thus transcend them, nor will his prose be infused with that quality of tension and excitement that comes from strong emotion just barely held under control. Only after he has mastered his own limitations can the historian begin to make constructive use of them. "Man's capacity to rise above his social and historical situation," as Carr puts it, "seems to be conditioned by the sensitivity with which he recognizes the extent of his involvement in it." The origin of true historical curiosity, as we have just seen, is a sense of relevance for one's own time; and the criteria of such relevance derive from a passionate attachment to one's own moral and aesthetic values. With the gradual unfolding of knowledge, this passion is finally sublimated into something that can claim the dignity of historical judgment.

The same considerations apply to another and still more troubling aspect of the objectivity question—the matter of moral judgments. Acton, we recall, reproached Ranke for failing to condemn the crimes of the great historical personalities of times gone by. Yet Acton himself fell into the opposite error by scattering praise and blame wholesale throughout the centuries. Both, I think, misunderstood the real point; the real question was one of historical imagination, in which both Ranke and Acton were in their different ways equally defective. The former—as a sheltered scholar knowing nothing of war and violence—could not feel with sufficient intensity the sufferings of the victims whose execution he narrated so coolly. (I recall the shock I experienced when I suddenly realized during a tranquil reading of his *History of the Popes* that the saintly Counter-Reformation pontiff whose ecclesiastical housecleaning Ranke was implicitly endorsing was actually having heretics burned at the stake!) Acton, in contrast, had little understanding for the agonizing dilemmas of statesmanship in eras when cruelty was taken for granted and when killing might be the only way to avoid being killed oneself. I do not think we have to make a choice between these eminent examples; we are not obliged either to declare our moral indifference or to hand out moral judgments right and left. If we simply do our job *as historians* with both conscientiousness and imagination, the ethical

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issues will emerge clearly enough. Herbert Butterfield puts it admirably in *History and Human Relations:*

> The truth is that . . . we need no help from the historian to bring us to the recognition of the criminality of religious persecution or wholesale massacre or the modern concentration camp or the repression of dissident opinions. And those who do not recognise that the killing and torturing of human beings is barbarity will hardly be brought to that realisation by any labels and nicknames that historians may attach to these things. There is one way in which the historian may reinforce the initial moral judgment and thereby assist the cause of morality in general; and that way lies directly within his province, for it entails merely describing, say, the massacre or the persecution, laying it out in concrete detail, and giving the specification of what it means in actuality. It is possible to say that one of the causes of moral indifference is precisely the failure to realise in an objective manner and make vivid to oneself the terrible nature of crime and suffering; but those who are unmoved by the historical description will not be stirred by any pontifical commentary that may be superadded.

Once more, the question of objectivity—of detachment, of moral judgment—proves to be no different whether it be the remote past or the recent present with which the historian is concerned. In the classic contrast between Ranke and Acton, the incompatibility of view remained the same both in their scholarly researches and in their comments on contemporary events. The specific point at issue was the Papacy in early modern times. But when the German historian wrote about the great powers of his own day, he endorsed the *status quo* with as much complacency as in swallowing the crimes of an earlier age, and when the English Catholic layman reported on the Vatican Council of 1870, he denounced the machinations of the Papal lobby with the same vigor with which he had exposed the cruelties of the Inquisition. For contemporary history and for history in the more conventional sense, the criteria and the limits of "objectivity" finally sift out as much alike. The historian can do no better than write with all honesty in the perspective his own irreducible values set for him. A conservative cannot help writing as a conservative, and a radical as a radical, and they should not feel obliged to apologize for so doing.

In both cases, the qualities of great history will emerge of themselves, whatever the specific ideological commitment of the author. I much prefer to read a book well done, but with whose assumptions I disagree, than a work based on values similar to mine that is technically or philosophically sloppy. Similarly, I think all great history has a built-in ambivalence. The historian adheres to his own ideological commitments—but another part of him understands and sympathizes with those of the enemy. The Protestant Ranke made a better case for the Popes than the Catholic Acton, and Francis Parkman, although he was convinced that the triumph of the British over the French in North America was a good thing, could not help writing of Montcalm's death with admiration and sorrow. Here again the sublimation of the cruder passions has been at work: the historian's saving ambivalence has helped him to get beyond mere journalism or partisan polemic. The undercurrent of strong emotion remains; the urgency is still there. But through the sustained application of thought, what began as noisy controversy—whether in present or in past—has been almost miraculously transmuted into history.

"Thucydides, an Athenian, wrote the history of the war between the Peloponnesians and the Athenians, beginning at the moment that it broke out, and believing that it would be a great war, and more worthy of relation than any that had preceded it." Such is the opening sentence of the first and the most famous of contemporary histories. Two millenia later Thucydides' Italian emulator, Francesco Guicciardini, started his *Storia d'Italia* on a similar note. "I have decided," he tells us, "to write down the things that happened within our memory in Italy, ever since French arms, called in by our own princes, began . . . to trouble the country." Not since the time of the Roman Empire, the historian explains, "had Italy ever enjoyed such prosperity nor

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experienced so desirable a state of affairs as that in which it reposed so securely in the year of our lord 1490." Then came the death of Lorenzo de'Medici and the French invasions—and a generation later Italian liberty was no more.

The tone is arrestingly alike. Both Thucydides and Guicciardini had lived through the events they described; both had recognized the catastrophic character of these events while they were still going on and had felt an overwhelming compulsion to explain this significance to their contemporaries while the memory was fresh in people's minds. The defeat of Athens by Sparta was for Thucydides—as it is for us—the decisive turning point in Hellenic history. For Guicciardini the French invasions, by upsetting the delicate Italian political balance, relentlessly sapped Italy's European cultural hegemony—and here once again the researches of subsequent scholars have not altered the contemporary judgment. Both Thucydides and Guicciardini combined literary distinction with an astonishingly accurate sense of the importance of their subject matter. By general assent, their creations rank as *great* contemporary history—great in theme as in execution. And the historians themselves were well aware of the extent of their own achievement; they were possessed and borne aloft by the majesty of their theme. It is worth pausing a moment over these two men to see whether from their example we can derive some clearer idea of the criteria of great contemporary history through twenty-five hundred years of historical literature.

Neither Thucydides nor Guicciardini was merely an observer. Both had been involved in responsible positions in the events they described, and both had experienced the bitterness of defeat and disgrace. Thucydides had served as an Athenian general in the early part of the Peloponnesian War; Guicciardini was a diplomat and a member of the Florentine oligarchy which had only grudgingly accepted the return of the Medici under foreign protection. Indeed both were by nature and origin traditionalist oligarchs, with a distrust of the tyrannies and popular commotions that dominated their times. Hence their sense of defeat was threefold: their personal disappointment was compounded by grief at the humiliation of their city and their own social class.

They wrote their histories, then, with a serenity born of despair. Retired from active participation, without hope for the future, they felt the call to explain to their contemporaries how these great disappointments had come to pass. The result was a special kind of detachment, a recognition that the fault did not all lie on one side: the incompetence of the historian's own party had contributed to the outcome. Thucydides was sufficiently honest to concede the Spartans' military excellence and to expose unsparingly the Athenian fecklessness which had led to disaster at the Siege of Syracuse; Guicciardini finally settled for Medicean rule as the best guarantee of "good order" after Italians of his own type had demonstrated their political incapacity. Once more we find that the historian's personal ambivalence is central to his account: the wrong side has won, but the defeated, in seeking the explanation for their own misfortunes, cannot help recognizing the ways in which the victors proved their moral and technical superiors.

As we move down to the nineteenth century, we discover a corresponding succession of the politically or ideologically disappointed who find themselves driven by inner necessity to write the history of their own time. In France the roster of these *hommes politiques manqués* is particularly distinguished: Guizot, Tocqueville, Thiers are among them. In one or two cases, the experience of public eclipse proves only temporary: after two decades of opposition, the old liberal Thiers is triumphantly vindicated by the defeat of Napoleon III in 1870. At other times, as with Tocqueville, the disappointment is permanent, and life closes on a note of deep foreboding: the European herald of American democracy does not live to see the fall of tyranny in his own country. Yet the undercurrent of sentiment remains constant. These men know public events at first hand; they have staked their all on politics and lost. And with this

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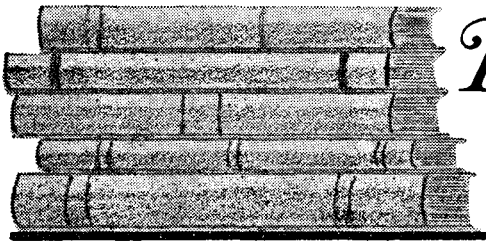

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loss they have attained to an understanding that would not have been theirs had they celebrated a series of victories. With all men who have played a leading role in great events, the temptation to personal apologia may at any time become overpowering. But strange as it may sound, this temptation is the more insidious when the public figure in question does not have a failure to explain away. For here "history" does the job for him—the events themselves prove him right—and he is not obliged to make the same effort of understanding or to give his vanquished enemies their due. I doubt if De Gaulle would have written so impressive a set of memoirs if he had composed them in the flush of triumph in 1945 or in the euphoria of vindication after 1958 rather than in the lean years when all his hopes seemed in ruins.

Not all great contemporary history need sound this note of elegy. Nor does it have to be written by someone who has had a direct contact with large events. I think of these merely as a kind of optimum stance toward the material. But the tone of immediacy and urgency that characterizes all major historical writing has to come from somewhere. If it does not derive from close personal experience, then there must be a vicarious human encounter that performs the same emotional function.

If we trace the biographies of those who have been chosen to be historians, we almost invariably come across an early experience that made a radical change in the individual's sense of the world around him —the shock of altered circumstance that compelled him to ask the question why. A family move to a new and exciting scene, the unexpected arrival of an exotic personality, the brutal discovery of status or class difference, the awakening of religious doubt—any one of these may give the decisive push. In my own case, a trip to France at the age of eight shattered my childhood securities. A fragile American illusion of tidy protectedness collapsed before the revelation of cruelty new and old, as the still-fresh trenches of the First World War and the horror of the forts around Verdun blended in my mind with the gray, threatening monuments of the Middle Ages, the gloomy mass of the Mont-Saint-Michel enveloped in interminable rain, the dungeons, the torture-chambers, the burning of Joan of Arc, who, so far as a child from across the Atlantic could tell, had never done harm to anyone.

So this child, like all the other thousands of children before him whom history had caught in its meshes, would not rest until he had begun to inquire how such things could have been. Historical vocations usually come early, although they may not be recognized at the start for what they are. Once the imagination has been stirred, the tormenting questions may lie dormant for years until one day a lifetime commitment declares itself without apparent preparation.

I remember a historian of the starchier professorial type once declaring that it was a waste of time to teach history in school because the boys and girls would get it all wrong and would have to relearn it when they reached college. All they would retain would be some unconnected personal anecdotes and hero-stories. I can scarcely imagine a judgment more mistaken. It is not a question of getting things "right"—not even the most learned historian will succeed in doing *that* in any ultimate meaning of the term. The real point is to stir the youthful imagination. And for this purpose anything will serve, no matter how suspect it may be from the standpoint of strict historical accuracy. With the very young we teachers should discard our professional fastidiousness. If the historical vision is caught in childhood, the corrections can be applied later on. But if we hobble the child's first flights of fancy, this vision may be blotted out or never appear at all.

It is notorious that Sir Walter Scott was an inaccurate historical novelist. If there ever was an imaginative writer of repute who "got things all wrong," it was he. Yet his novels of chivalry and "derring-do" (even his vocabulary was phony) cradled the fancy of generations of future historians. When we inquire into the boyhood of leading historical writers of the nineteenth century, it is instructive to find how often

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Sir Walter is at the start of things. In Ranke's case, the Waverley Novels lit a bonfire that blazed on for eighty years. Today there must be other historical romances —doubtless much better "researched" than were Scott's—which are kindling the same wild flame. And a teacher of history would be greatly in error if he should inadvertently put it out.

The Greek stories of gods and heroes, the legends of King Arthur, the battles of our own Civil War—the games of running and hiding that children play in open fields or city streets—simply a chance occurrence may provide the decisive impulse to reflection. It matters little, so long as the historical imagination awakens. This, we have seen, is true of all history, not merely of the history of our own time. But in the context of the first decisive questions, contemporary history plays a crucial part. In the triad formed by the present instant, the recent past, and the remote experience of our ancestors, it is the second that links the other two. It is the one step back that enables the imagination to take the great leap to what is almost totally strange. In my own case, if I had not witnessed the blasted relics of the slaughter that had been raging when I was born, my tortured fancy might not have jumped so early to the riddle of medieval cruelty.

Whether child or adult, whether amateur lover of historical literature or professional scholar forever at his task of scrupulous documentation, the historian is obliged to reckon with his own time. He cannot escape it; its pressures are all around him. And if his trade has more than antiquarian meaning for him, he will feel impelled to comment on the recent past. For the same dilemmas of personal loyalty and ideal allegiance, of inborn ruthlessness and good will toward men, which have troubled his mind in his study of remote ages will force themselves upon him when he rests his weary eyes for a moment on the circumstances in which he is actually living. Marc Bloch, the medievalist, was inspired by his experience in 1940 as a staff officer of the reserve to write a little study of the fall of France. And the power of his account—the most convincing analysis of that great defeat I have ever read—derives precisely from the fact that the tragedy in *Strange Defeat* is seen through the eyes of a man who has traced with affectionate attention more than a millenium of his country's history and whose unutterable sorrow can be glimpsed behind every balanced phrase and reasoned historical judgment.

In Europe it is not uncommon for historians to practice two specialties, an early, strictly professional field and the history of their own time. In the United States a mistaken overemphasis on academic rigor has led the average scholar to confine his efforts to a single area of historical knowledge. Most specialists, protesting their lack of professional qualifications, shun the writing of contemporary history. But in so doing they leave the field to others who are still less qualified. Indeed, the specialist on some remote area of man's experience, like Bloch, may have a particular aptitude for the comparative understanding of the almost-yesterday, an understanding that may long lie unsuspected until the accident of personal involvement suddenly brings it to conscious expression.

Somebody must interpret our era to our contemporaries. Somebody must stake out the broad lines of social change and cultural restatement, and he must not be afraid to make predictions or chagrined at being occasionally caught out on a limb. There was a time when universally-minded social thinkers performed this function, when the fathers of sociology, from Montesquieu through Marx to Weber, freely speculated on where their age was heading. Today, the sociologists, like the historians, have grown cautious. The chair of speculative social thought is nearly everywhere without an occupant. Historians have peculiar qualifications to fill it, and they are beginning to do so. For the historian who sees no incompatibility between his different roles—who is at least as much an artist as he is a social scientist—is uniquely equipped to lead others toward the imaginative fusion of these attributes, and so to illuminate the era in which we live.

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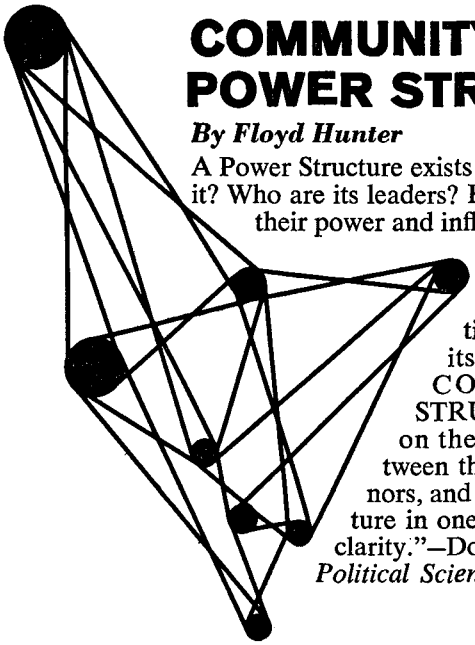

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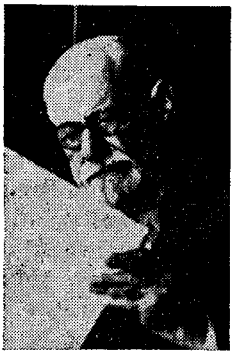

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Man's Conquest of Space

HANNAH ARENDT

HAS MAN'S CONQUEST OF SPACE increased or diminished his stature? The question raised is addressed to the layman, not the scientist, and it is inspired by the humanist's concern with man, as distinguished from the physicist's concern with the reality of the physical world. To understand physical reality seems to demand not only the renunciation of an anthropocentric or geocentric world view, but also a radical elimination of all anthropomorphic elements and principles, as they arise either from the world given to the five human senses or from the categories inherent in the human mind. The question assumes that man is the highest being we know of, an assumption which we have inherited from the Romans, whose *humanitas* was so alien to the Greek frame of mind that they had not even a word for it. (The reason for the absence of the word *humanitas* from Greek language and thought was that the Greeks, in contrast to the Romans, never thought that man is the highest being there is. Aristotle calls this belief *atopos,* "absurd.") This view of man is even more alien to the scientist, to whom man is no more than a special case of organic life, and to whom man's habitat —the earth, together with earthbound laws—is no more than a special borderline case of absolute, universal laws, that is, laws that rule the immensity of the universe. Surely, the scientist cannot permit himself to ask: What consequences will the result of my investigations have for the stature (or, for that matter, for the future) of man? It has been the glory of modern science that it has been able to emancipate itself completely from all such truly humanistic concerns.

The question propounded here, insofar as it is addressed to the

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layman, must be answered in terms of common sense and in everyday language (if it can be answered at all). The answer is not likely to convince the scientist, because he has been forced, under the compulsion of facts and experiments, to renounce sense perception and hence common sense, by which we coordinate the perception of our five senses into the total awareness of reality. He has also been forced to renounce normal language, which even in its most sophisticated conceptual refinements remains inextricably bound to the world of the senses and to our common sense. For the scientist, man is no more than an observer of the universe in its manifold manifestations. The progress of modern science has demonstrated very forcefully to what an extent this observed universe, the infinitely small no less than the infinitely large, escapes not only the coarseness of human sense perception but even the enormously ingenious instruments that have been built for its refinement. The phenomena with which modern physical research is concerned turn up like "mysterious messenger[s] from the real world," according to Max Planck in *The Universe in the Light of Modern Physics,* and we know no more about them than that they affect our measuring instruments in a certain way, suspecting all the while with Eddington that "the former have as much resemblance to the latter as a telephone number has to a subscriber."

The goal of modern science, which eventually and quite literally has led us to the moon, is no longer "to augment and order" human experiences (as Niels Bohr, still tied to a vocabulary that his own work has helped to make obsolete, described it); it is much rather to discover what lies *behind* natural phenomena as they reveal themselves to the senses and the mind of man. Had the scientist reflected upon the nature of the human sensory and mental apparatus, had he raised questions such as *What is the nature of man and what should be his stature? What is the goal of science and why does man pursue knowledge?* or even *What is life and what distinguishes human from animal life?,* he would never have arrived where modern science stands today. The answers to these questions would have acted as definitions and hence as limitations

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of his efforts. In the words of Niels Bohr, "Only by renouncing an explanation of life in the ordinary sense do we gain a possibility of taking into account its characteristics."

That the question proposed here makes no sense to the scientist *qua* scientist is no argument against it. The question challenges the layman and the humanist to sit in judgment over what the scientist is doing, and this debate must of course be joined by the scientists themselves insofar as they are fellow citizens. But all answers given in this debate, whether they come from laymen or philosophers or scientists, are nonscientific (although not antiscientific); they can never be demonstrably true or false. Their truth resembles rather the validity of agreements than the compelling validity of scientific statements. Even when the answers are given by philosophers whose way of life is solitude, they are arrived at by an exchange of opinions among many men, most of whom may no longer be among the living. Such truth can never command general agreement, but it frequently outlasts the compellingly and demonstrably true statements of the sciences which, especially in recent times, have the uncomfortable inclination never to stay put, although at any given moment they are, and must be, valid for all. In other words, notions such as life, or man, or science, or knowledge are prescientific by definition, and the question is whether or not the actual development of science which has led to the conquest of terrestrial space and to the invasion of the space of the universe has changed these notions to such an extent that they no longer make sense. For the point of the matter is, of course, that modern science—no matter what its origins and original goals—has changed and reconstructed the world we live in so radically that it could be argued that the layman and the humanist, still trusting their common sense and communicating in everyday language, are out of touch with reality, and that their questions and anxieties have become irrelevant. Who cares about the stature of man when he can go to the moon? This sort of bypassing the question would be very tempting indeed if it were true that we have come to live in a world that only the scientists "understand." They would then be in a position of the "few" whose superior knowledge entitles them to rule the "many,"

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namely, the laymen and the humanists and the philosophers, or all those who raise prescientific questions because of ignorance.

This division between the scientist and the layman, however, is very far from the truth. The fact is not merely that the scientist spends more than half of his life in the same world of sense perception, of common sense, and of everyday language as his fellow citizens, but that he has come in his own privileged field of activity to a point where the naïve questions and anxieties of the layman have made themselves felt very forcefully, albeit in a different manner. The scientist has not only left behind the layman with his limited understanding, he has left behind himself and his own power of understanding, which is still human understanding, when he goes to work in the laboratory and begins to communicate in mathematical language. Max Planck was right, and the miracle of modern science is indeed that this science could be purged "of all anthropomorphic elements," because the purging itself was done by men. The theoretical perplexities that have confronted the new non-anthropocentric and nongeocentric (or heliocentric) science because its data refuse to be ordered by any of the natural mental categories of the human brain are well enough known. In the words of Erwin Schrödinger, the new universe that we try to "conquer" is not only "practically inaccessible, but not even thinkable," for "however we think it, it is wrong; not perhaps quite as meaningless as a 'triangular circle,' but much more so than a 'winged lion.' "

Even these perplexities, since they are of a theoretical nature and perhaps concern only the few, are nothing compared to such paradoxes existing in our everyday world as electronic "brains," devised and constructed by men, which can not only do man's brain work incomparably better and more swiftly (this, after all, is the outstanding characteristic of all machines), but can do "what a human brain cannot *comprehend,*" as George Gamow recently put it in a very interesting essay on the "Physical Sciences and Technology," in *The Great Ideas Today 1962*. The often mentioned "lag" of the social sciences with respect to the natural sciences or of man's political development with respect to his technical and scientific know-how is no more than a red herring drawn into this

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debate, and can only divert attention from the main problem, which is that man can *do,* and successfully do, what he cannot comprehend and cannot express in everyday human language.

It may be noteworthy that among the scientists it was primarily the older generation, men like Einstein and Planck, Niels Bohr and Schrödinger, who were most acutely worried about this state of affairs which their own work had chiefly brought about. They were still firmly rooted in a tradition that demanded that scientific theories fulfill certain definitely humanistic requirements such as simplicity, beauty and harmony. A theory was still supposed to be "satisfactory," namely, satisfactory to human reason in that it served to "save the phenomena," to explain all observed facts. Even today, we still hear that "modern physicists are inclined to believe in the validity of general relativity for aesthetic reasons, because it is mathematically so elegant and philosophically so satisfying" (Sergio de Benedetti). Einstein's extreme reluctance to sacrifice the principle of causality as Planck's Quantum Theory demanded is well known; his main objection was of course that with it all lawfulness was about to depart from the universe, that it was as though God ruled the world by "playing dice." And since his own discoveries, according to Niels Bohr, had come about through a "remolding and generalizing [of] the whole edifice of classical physics . . . lending to our world picture a unity surpassing all previous expectations," it seems only natural that Einstein tried to come to terms with the new theories of his colleagues and his successors through "the search for a more complete conception," through a new and surpassing generalization. Thus Max Planck could call the Theory of Relativity "the completion and culmination of the structure of classical physics," its very "crowning point." But Planck himself, although fully aware that the Quantum Theory, in contrast to the Theory of Relativity, signified a complete break with classical physical theory, held it to be "essential for the healthy development of physics that among the postulates of this science we reckon, not merely the existence of law in general, but also the strictly causal character of this law."

Niels Bohr, however, went one step further. For him, causality,

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determinism, and necessity of laws belonged to the categories of "our necessarily prejudiced conceptual frame," and he was no longer frightened when he met "in atomic phenomena regularities of quite a new kind, defying deterministic pictorial description." The trouble is that what defies description in terms of the "prejudices" of the human mind defies description in every conceivable way of human language; it can no longer be described at all, and it is being expressed, but not described, in mathematical processes. Bohr still hoped that, since "no experience is definable without a logical frame," these new experiences would in due time fall into place through "an appropriate widening of the conceptual framework" which would also remove all present paradoxes and "apparent disharmonies." But this hope, I am afraid, will be disappointed. The categories and ideas of human reason have their ultimate source in the human senses, and all conceptual or metaphysical language is actually and strictly metaphorical. Moreover, the human brain which supposedly does our thinking is as terrestrial, earthbound, as any other part of the human body. It was precisely by abstracting from these terrestrial conditions, by appealing to a power of imagination and abstraction that would, as it were, lift the human mind out of the gravitational field of the earth and look down upon it from some point in the universe, that modern science reached its most glorious and, at the same time, most baffling achievements.

In 1929 shortly before the arrival of the Atomic Revolution, marked by the splitting of the atom and the conquest of universal space, Planck demanded that the results obtained by mathematical processes "must be translated back into the language of the world of our senses if they are to be of any use to us." The three decades that have passed since these words were written have proved not only that such translation seems less and less possible, and that the loss of contact between the physical world view and the sense world has become even more conspicuous, but also—and in our context this is even more alarming—that this has by no means meant that results of this new science are of no practical use, or that the new world view, as Planck had predicted in case the translation back

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into ordinary language should fail, "would be no better than a bubble ready to burst at the first puff of wind." On the contrary, one is tempted to say that it is much more likely that the planet we inhabit will go up in smoke as a consequence of theories that are entirely unrelated to the world of the senses, and defy all description in human language, than that even a *hurricane* will cause the theories to burst like a bubble.

It is, I think, safe to say that nothing was more alien to the minds of the scientists, who brought about the most radical and the most rapid revolutionary process the world has ever seen, than any will to power. Nothing was more remote than any wish to "conquer space" and to go to the moon. Nor were they prompted by an unseemly curiosity in the sense of a *temptatio oculorum.* It was indeed their search for "true reality" that led them to lose confidence in appearances, in the phenomena as they reveal themselves of their own accord to human sense and reason. They were inspired by an extraordinary love of harmony and lawfulness which taught them that they would have to step outside any merely given sequence or series of occurrences if they wanted to discover the overall beauty and order of the whole, that is, the universe. (This may explain why they seem to have been less distressed by the fact that their discoveries served the invention of the most murderous gadgets than they have been disturbed by the shattering of all their most cherished ideals of necessity and lawfulness. These ideals were lost when the scientists discovered that there is nothing indivisible in matter, no *a-tomos,* that we live in an expanding, nonlimited universe, and that chance seems to rule supreme wherever this "true reality," the physical world, has receded entirely from the range of human senses and from the range of all instruments by which their coarseness was refined.)

The modern scientific enterprise began with thoughts never thought before (Copernicus, we are told by J. Bronowski in *Science and Human Values,* imagined he was "standing in the sun . . . overlooking the planets") and with things never seen before (Galileo's telescope pierced the distance between earth and sky and

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in his own words delivered the secrets of the stars to human cognition "with all the certainty of sense evidence"). It reached its classic expression with Newton's law of gravitation, in which the same equation covers the movements of the heavenly bodies and the motion of terrestrial things on earth. Einstein indeed only generalized this science of the modern age when he introduced an "observer who is poised freely in space," and not just at one definite point like the sun, and he proved that not only Copernicus but also Newton still required "that the universe should have a kind of center" although this center of course was no longer the earth. It is in fact quite obvious that the scientists' strongest intellectual motivation was Einstein's "striving after generalization," and that if they appealed to power at all, it was the interconnected formidable power of abstraction and imagination. Even today, when billions of dollars are spent year in and year out for highly "useful" projects that are the immediate results of the development of pure, theoretical science, and when the actual power of countries and governments depends upon the performance of many thousands of researchers, the physicist is still likely to look down upon all these space scientists as mere "plumbers."

The sad truth of the matter, however, is that the lost contact between the world of the senses and appearances and the physical world view has been reestablished not by the pure scientist but by the "plumber." The technicians, who account today for the overwhelming majority of all "researchers," have brought the results of the scientists down to earth. And even though the scientist is still beset by paradoxes and the most bewildering perplexities, the very fact that a whole technology could develop out of his results demonstrates the "soundness" of his theories and hypotheses more convincingly than any merely scientific observation or experiment ever could. It is perfectly true that the scientist himself does not want to go to the moon; he knows that for his purposes unmanned spaceships carrying the best instruments human ingenuity can invent will do the job of exploring the moon's surface much better than dozens of astronauts. And yet, an actual change of the human world, the conquest of space or whatever we may wish to

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call it, is achieved only when manned space carriers are shot into the universe, so that man himself can go where up to now only human imagination and its power of abstraction, or human ingenuity and its power of fabrication, could reach. To be sure, all we plan to do now is to explore our own immediate surroundings in the universe, the infinitely small place that the human race could reach even if it were to travel with the velocity of light. In view of man's life span—the only absolute limitation left at the present moment—it is quite unlikely that he will ever go much farther. But even for this limited job, we have to leave the world of our senses and of our bodies, not only in imagination but in reality.

It is as though Einstein's imagined "observer poised in free space"—surely the creation of the human mind and its power of abstraction—is being followed by a bodily observer who must behave as though he were a mere child of abstraction and imagination. It is at this point that all the theoretical perplexities of the new physical world view intrude as realities upon man's everyday world and throw out of gear his "natural," that is, earthbound, common sense. He would, for instance, be confronted in reality with Einstein's famous "twin paradox," which hypothetically assumes that "a twin brother who takes off on a space journey in which he travels at a sizeable fraction of the speed of light would return to find his earthbound twin either older than he or little more than a dim recollection in the memory of his descendants." For although many physicists had found this paradox difficult to swallow, the "clock paradox," on which it is based, seems to have been verified experimentally, so that the only alternative to it would be the assumption that earthborn life under all circumstances remains bound to a time concept that demonstrably does not belong among "true realities," but among mere appearances. We have reached the stage where the Cartesian radical doubt of reality as such, the first philosophical answer to the discoveries of science in the modern age, may become subject to physical experiments that would make short shrift of Descartes's famous consolation, *I doubt therefore I am,* and of his conviction that, whatever the state of reality and of truth as they are given to the senses and to reason, you cannot

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"doubt of your doubt and remain uncertain whether you doubt or not."

The magnitude of the space enterprise seems to me beyond dispute, and all objections raised against it on the purely utilitarian level—that it is too expensive, that the money were better spent on education and the improvement of the citizens, on the fight against poverty and disease, or whatever other worthy purposes may come to mind—sound to me slightly absurd, out of tune with the things that are at stake and whose consequences today appear still quite unpredictable. There is, moreover, another reason why I think these arguments are beside the point. They are singularly inapplicable because the enterprise itself could come about only through an amazing development of man's scientific capabilities. The very integrity of science demands that not only utilitarian considerations but even the reflection upon the stature of man be left in abeyance. Has not each of the advances of science, since the time of Copernicus, almost automatically resulted in a decrease in his stature? Man, insofar as he is a scientist, does not care about his own stature in the universe or about his position on the evolutionary ladder of animal life; this "carelessness" is his pride and his glory. The simple fact that physicists split the atom without any hesitations the very moment they knew how to do it, although they realized full well the enormous destructive potentialities of their operation, demonstrates that the scientist *qua* scientist does not even care about the survival of the human race on earth or, for that matter, about the survival of the planet itself. All associations for "Atoms for Peace," all warnings not to use the new power unwisely, and even the pangs of conscience many scientists felt when the first bombs fell on Hiroshima and Nagasaki cannot obscure this simple, elementary fact. For in all these efforts the scientists acted not as scientists but as citizens, and if their voices have more authority than the voices of laymen, they do so only because the scientists are in possession of more precise information. Valid and plausible arguments against the "conquest of space" could be raised only if they were to show that the whole enterprise might be self-defeating in its own terms.

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There are a few indications that such might indeed be the case. If we leave out of account the human life span, which under no circumstances (even if biology should succeed in extending it significantly and man were able to travel with the speed of light) will permit man to explore more than his immediate surroundings in the immensity of the universe, the most significant indication that it might be self-defeating consists in Heisenberg's discovery of the uncertainty principle. Heisenberg showed conclusively that there is a definite and final limit to the accuracy of all measurements obtainable by man-devised instruments. In his own words, "We decide, by our selection of the type of observation employed, which aspects of nature are to be determined and which are to be blurred." He holds that "the most important new result of nuclear physics was the recognition of the possibility of applying quite different types of natural laws, without contradiction, to one and the same physical event. This is due to the fact that within a system of laws which are based on certain fundamental ideas only certain quite definite ways of asking questions make sense, and thus, that such a system is separated from others which allow different questions to be put." From this he concluded that the modern search for "true reality" behind mere appearances, which has brought about the world we live in and resulted in the Atomic Revolution, has led into a situation in the sciences themselves in which man has lost the very objectivity of the natural world, so that man in his hunt for "objective reality" suddenly discovered that he always "confronts himself alone."

The truth of Heisenberg's observation seems to me to transcend by far the field of strictly scientific endeavor and to gain in poignancy if it is applied to the technology that has grown out of modern science. Every progress in science in the last decades, from the moment it was absorbed into technology and thus introduced into the factual world where we live our everyday lives, has brought with it a veritable avalanche of fabulous instruments and ever more ingenious machinery. All of this makes it more unlikely every day that man will encounter anything in the world around him that is not man-made and hence is not, in the last analysis, he himself in a different disguise. The astronaut, shot into outer space

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and imprisoned in his instrument-ridden capsule where each actual physical encounter with his surroundings would spell immediate death, might well be taken as the symbolic incarnation of Heisenberg's man—the man who will be the less likely ever to meet anything but himself the more ardently he wishes to eliminate all anthropocentric considerations from his encounter with the nonhuman world around him.

It is at this point, it seems to me, that the humanist's concern with man and the stature of man has caught up with the scientist. It is as though the sciences had done what the humanities never could have achieved, namely, to prove demonstrably the validity of this concern. The situation, as it presents itself today, oddly resembles an elaborate verification of a remark by Franz Kafka, written at the very beginning of this development: Man, he said, "found the Archimedean point, but he used it against himself; it seems that he was permitted to find it only under this condition." For the conquest of space, the search for a point outside the earth from which it would be possible to unhinge, as it were, the planet itself, is no accidental result of the modern age's science. This was from its very beginnings not a "natural" but a universal science, it was not a physics but an astrophysics which looked upon the earth from a point in the universe. In terms of this development, the attempt to conquer space means that man hopes he will be able to journey to the Archimedean point which he anticipated by sheer force of abstraction and imagination. However, in doing so, he will necessarily lose his advantage. All he can find is the Archimedean point with respect to the earth, but once arrived there and having acquired this absolute power over his earthly habitat, he would need a new Archimedean point, and so *ad infinitum*. In other words, man can only get lost in the immensity of the universe, for the only true Archimedean point would be the absolute void behind the universe.

Yet even if man recognizes that there might be absolute limits to his search for knowledge and that it might be wise to suspect such limitations whenever it turns out that the scientist can do more

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than he is capable of comprehending, and even if he realizes that he cannot "conquer space," but at best make a few discoveries in our solar system, the journey into space and to the Archimedean point with respect to the earth is far from being a harmless or unequivocally triumphant enterprise. It could add to the stature of man inasmuch as man, in distinction from other living things, desires to be at home in a "territory" as large as possible. In that case, he would only take possession of what is his own, although it took him a long time to discover it. These new possessions, like all property, would have to be limited, and once the limit is reached and the limitations established, the new world view that may conceivably grow out of it is likely to be once more geocentric and anthropomorphic, although not in the old sense of the earth being the center of the universe and of man being the highest being there is. It would be geocentric in the sense that the earth, and not the universe, is the center and the home of mortal men, and it would be anthropomorphic in the sense that man would count his own factual mortality among the elementary conditions under which his scientific efforts are possible at all.

At this moment, the prospects for such an entirely beneficial development and solution of the present predicaments of modern science and technology do not look particularly good. We have come to our present capacity to "conquer space" through our new ability to handle nature from a point in the universe outside the earth. For this is what we actually do when we release energy processes that ordinarily go on only in the sun, or attempt to initiate in a test tube the processes of cosmic evolution, or build machines for the production and control of energies unknown in the household of earthly nature. Without as yet actually occupying the point where Archimedes had wished to stand, we have found a way to act on the earth as though we disposed of terrestrial nature from outside, from the point of Einstein's "observer freely poised in space." If we look down from this point upon what is going on on earth and upon the various activities of men, that is, if we apply the Archimedean point to ourselves, then these activities will indeed appear to ourselves as no more than "overt behavior," which we can

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study with the same methods we use to study the behavior of rats. Seen from a sufficient distance, the cars in which we travel and which we know we built ourselves will look as though they were, as Heisenberg once put it, "as inescapable a part of ourselves as the snail's shell is to its occupant." All our pride in what we can do will disappear into some kind of mutation of the human race; the whole of technology, seen from this point, in fact no longer appears "as the result of a conscious human effort to extend man's material powers, but rather as a large-scale biological process." Under these circumstances, speech and everyday language would indeed be no longer a meaningful utterance that transcends behavior even if it only expresses it, and it would much better be replaced by the extreme and in itself meaningless formalism of mathematical signs.

The conquest of space and the science that made it possible have come perilously close to this point. If they ever should reach it in earnest, the stature of man would not simply be lowered by all standards we know of, it would have been destroyed.

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"Who Was Benjamin Franklin?"

JOHN WILLIAM WARD

BENJAMIN FRANKLIN bulks large in our national consciousness, sharing room with Washington and Jefferson and Lincoln. Yet it is hard to say precisely what it means to name Franklin one of our cultural heroes. He was, as one book about him has it, "many-sided." The sheer variety of his character has made it possible to praise him and damn him with equal vigor. At home, such dissimilar Yankees as the laconic Calvin Coolidge and the passionate Theodore Parker could each find reason to admire him. Abroad, David Hume could say that he was "the first great man of letters" for whom Europe was "beholden" to America. Yet D. H. Lawrence, brought up, he tells us, in the industrial wastelands of midland England on the pious saws of "Poor Richard," could only "utter a long, loud curse" against "this dry, moral, utilitarian little democrat."

Part of the difficulty in comprehending Franklin's meaning is due to the opposites he seems to have contained with complete serenity within his own personality. He was an eminently reasonable man who maintained a deep skepticism about the power of reason. He was a model of industriousness who, preaching the gospel of hard work, kept his shop only until it kept him and retired at forty-two. He was a cautious and prudent man who was a revolutionist. And, to name only one more seeming contradiction, he was one who had a keen eye for his own advantage and personal advancement who spent nearly all his adult life in the service of others. Small wonder that there have been various interpretations of so various a character.

The problem may seem no problem at all. Today, when we all

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know that the position of the observer determines the shape of reality, we observe the observer. If Franklin, seeing to it that the streets of Philadelphia are well lit and swept clean at a moderate price, that no fires rage, does not appeal to D. H. Lawrence, we tend not to think of Franklin. We think of Lawrence; we remember his atavistic urge to explore the dark and passionate underside of life and move on. Franklin contained in his own character so many divergent aspects that each observer can make the mistake of seeing one aspect as all and celebrate or despise Franklin accordingly. Mr. I. Bernard Cohen, who has written so well on so much of Franklin, has remarked that "an account of Franklin . . . is apt to be a personal testament of the commentator concerning the America he most admires." Or contemns.

Yet there still remains the obstinate fact that Franklin could mean so many things to so many men, that he was so many-sided, that he did contain opposites, that he was, in other words, so many different characters. One suspects that here is the single most important thing about Franklin. Rather than spend our energies trying to find some consistency in this protean, many-sided figure, trying to resolve who Franklin truly was, we might perhaps better accept his variety itself as our major problem and try to understand that. To insist on the importance of the question, "Who was Benjamin Franklin?" may finally be more conclusive than to agree upon an answer.

The place to begin to ask the question is with the *Memoirs,* with the *Autobiography* as we have come to call them, and the place to begin there is with the history of the text. Fascinating in and of itself, the history of the text gives us an initial lead into the question of the elusiveness of Franklin's personality.

The *Autobiography* was written in four parts. The first part, addressed by Franklin to his son, William, was begun during some few weeks in July and August, 1771, while Franklin was visiting with his friend, Jonathan Shipley, the Bishop of St. Asaph, in Hampshire, England. Franklin was then sixty-five years old. As he wrote the first part he also carefully made a list of topics he would subsequently treat. Somehow the manuscript and list fell into the hands of one Abel James who eleven years later wrote Franklin, returning to him the list of topics but not the first part of the manu-

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script, urging him to take up his story once again. This was in 1782, or possibly early in January, 1783. Franklin was in France as one of the peace commissioners. He wrote the second part in France in 1784, after the achievement of peace, indicating the beginning and the ending of this short second part in the manuscript itself.

In 1785, Franklin returned to America, promising to work on the manuscript during the voyage. Instead he wrote three of his utilitarian essays: on navigation, on how to avoid smoky streetlamp chimneys, and on his famous stove. He did not return to his life's story until 1788. Then, after retiring from the presidency of the state of Pennsylvania in the spring, Franklin, quite sick, made his will and put his house in order before turning again to his own history. This was in August, 1788. Franklin was eighty-three years old, in pain, and preparing for death. The third part is the longest part of the autobiography, less interesting than the first two, and for many years was thought to conclude the manuscript.

In 1789, Franklin had his grandson, Benjamin Franklin Bache, make two fair copies of Parts I, II and III in order to send them to friends abroad, Benjamin Vaughan in England and M. le Veillard in France. Then, sometime before his death in April, 1790, Franklin added the last and fourth part, some seven and one-half manuscript pages, which was not included, naturally, in the fair copies sent abroad. For the rest, Mr. Max Farrand, our authority on the history of the text:

> After [Franklin's] death, the publication of the autobiography was eagerly awaited, as its existence was widely known, but for nearly thirty years the reading public had to content itself with French translations of the first and second parts, which were again translated from the French into other languages, and even retranslated into English. When the authorized English publication finally appeared in 1818, it was not taken from the original manuscript but from a copy, as was the preceding French version of the first part. The copy, furthermore, did not include the fourth and last part, which also reached the public in a French translation in 1828.
>
> . . . the complete autobiography was not printed in English from the original manuscript until 1868, nearly eighty years after Franklin's death.

The story is, as I have said, interesting in and of itself. The tangled history of one of our most important texts has its own fasci-

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nation, but it also provides us the first clue to our question. Surely it must strike any reader of the *Autobiography* as curious that a character who speaks so openly should at the same time seem so difficult to define. But the history of the text points the way to an answer. All we need do is ask why Franklin wrote his memoirs.

When the Quaker, Abel James, wrote Franklin, returning his list of topics and asking "kind, humane, and benevolent Ben Franklin" to continue his life's story, "a work which would be useful and entertaining not only to a few but to millions," Franklin sent the letter on to his friend, Benjamin Vaughan, asking for advice. Vaughan concurred. He too urged Franklin to publish the history of his life because he could think of no "more efficacious advertisement" of America than Franklin's history. "All that has happened to you," he reminded Franklin, "is also connected with the detail of the manners and situation of a rising people." Franklin included James's and Vaughan's letters in his manuscript to explain why he resumed his story. What had gone before had been written for his family; "what follows," he said in his "Memo," "was written . . . in compliance with the advice contained in these letters, and accordingly intended for the public. The affairs of the Revolution occasioned the interruption."

The point is obvious enough. When Franklin resumed his story, he did so in full self-consciousness that he was offering himself to the world as a representative type, the American. Intended for the public now, his story was to be an example for young Americans, as Abel James would have it, and an advertisement to the world, as Benjamin Vaughan would have it. We had just concluded a successful revolution; the eyes of all the world were upon us. Just as America had succeeded in creating itself a nation, Franklin set out to show how the American went about creating his own character. As Benjamin Vaughan said, Franklin's life would "give a noble rule and example of self-education" because of Franklin's "discovery that the thing is in many a man's private power." So what follows is no longer the simple annals of Franklin's life for the benefit of his son. Benjamin Franklin plays his proper role. He becomes "The American."

How well he filled the part that his public urged him to play,

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we can see by observing what he immediately proceeds to provide. In the pages that follow James's and Vaughan's letters, Franklin quickly treats four matters: the establishment of a lending library, that is, the means for satisfying the need for self-education; the importance of frugality and industriousness in one's calling; the social utility of religion; and, of course, the thirteen rules for ordering one's life. Here, in a neat package, were all the materials that went into the making of the self-made man. This is how one goes about making a success of one's self. If the sentiments of our Declaration were to provide prompt notes for European revolutions, then Franklin, as the American Democrat, acted them out. Family, class, religious orthodoxy, higher education: all these were secondary to character and common sense. The thing was in many a man's private power.

If we look back now at the first part, the opening section addressed by Franklin to his son, William, we can see a difference and a similarity. The difference is, of course, in the easy and personal tone, the more familiar manner, appropriate to a communication with one's son. It is in these early pages that Franklin talks more openly about his many *errata,* his "frequent intrigues with low women," and displays that rather cool and calculating attitude toward his wife. Rather plain dealing, one might think, at least one who did not know that William was a bastard son.

But the similarity between the two parts is more important. The message is the same, although addressed to a son, rather than to the world: how to go about making a success. "From the poverty and obscurity in which I was born and in which I passed my earliest years," writes the father to the son, "I have raised myself to a state of affluence and some degree of celebrity in the world." A son, especially, must have found that "some" hard to take. But the career is not simply anecdotal: "my posterity will perhaps be desirous of learning the means, which I employed, and which, thanks to Providence, so well succeeded with me. They may also deem them fit to be imitated." The story is exemplary, although how the example was to affect a son who was, in 1771, about forty years old and already Royal Governor of New Jersey is another matter.

The story has remained exemplary because it is the success

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story to beat all success stories: the runaway apprentice printer who rose to dine with kings; the penniless boy, walking down Market Street with two large rolls under his arms, who was to sit in Independence Hall and help create a new nation. But notice that the story does not deal with the success itself. That is presumed, of course, but the *Autobiography* never gets to the later and more important years because the *Autobiography* is not about success. It is about the formation of the character that makes success possible. The subject of the *Autobiography* is the making of a character. Having lifted himself by his own bootstraps, Franklin described it that way: "I have raised myself." We were not to find the pat phrase until the early nineteenth century when the age of the common man made the style more common: "the self-made man." The character was for life, of course, and not for fiction where we usually expect to encounter the made-up, but that should not prevent us from looking a little more closely at the act of creation. We can look in two ways: first, by standing outside the *Autobiography* and assessing it by what we know from elsewhere; second, by reading the *Autobiography* itself more closely.

A good place to begin is with those years in France around the end of the Revolution. It is so delicious an episode in plain Ben's life. More importantly—as Franklin said, one can always find a principle to justify one's inclinations—it is in these very years at Passy that Franklin, in response to James's and Vaughan's letters, wrote those self-conscious pages of the second part of the *Autobiography*. Just as he wrote the lines, he played them. As Carl Van Doren has written, "the French were looking for a hero who should combine the reason and wit of Voltaire with the primitive virtues celebrated by Rousseau. . . . [Franklin] denied them nothing." This is the period of the simple Quaker dress, the fur cap and the spectacles. France went wild in its adulation and Franklin knew why. "Think how this must appear," he wrote a friend, "among the powdered heads of Paris."

But he was also moving with equal ease in that world, the world of the powdered heads of Paris, one of the most cosmopolitan, most preciously civilized societies in history. Although he was no Quaker, Franklin was willing to allow the French to think so. They called

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him *"le bon Quackeur."* The irony was unintentional, a matter of translation. But at the same time that he was filling the role of the simple backwoods democrat, the innocent abroad, he was also playing cavalier in the brilliant salon of Madame Helvétius, the widow of the French philosopher. Madame Helvétius is supposed to have been so beautiful that Fontenelle, the great popularizer of Newton, who lived to be one hundred years old, was said to have paid her the most famous compliment of the age: "Ah, madame, if I were only eighty again!" Madame Helvétius was sixty when Franklin knew her and the classic anecdote of their acquaintance is that Madame Helvétius is said to have reproached him for not coming to see her, for putting off his long anticipated visit. Franklin replied, "Madame, I am waiting until the nights are longer." There was also Madame Brillon, not a widow, who once wrote to Franklin, "People have the audacity to criticize my pleasant habit of sitting on your knee, and yours of always asking me for what I always refuse."

Some, discovering this side of Franklin, have written him off simply as a rather lively old lecher. Abigail Adams, good New England lady that she was, was thoroughly shocked. She set Madame Helvétius down as a "very bad woman." But Franklin, despite his public style, was not so provincial. He appealed to Madame Brillon that he had spent so many days with her that surely she could spend one night with him. She mockingly called him a sophist. He then appealed to her charity and argued that it was in the design of Providence that she grant him his wish. If somehow a son of the Puritans, Franklin had grown far beyond the reach of their sermonizing. Thomas Hooker had thought, "It's a grievous thing to the loose person, he cannot have his pleasures but he must have his guilt and gall with them." But Franklin wrote Madame Brillon, "Reflect how many of our duties [Providence] has ordained naturally to be pleasures; and that it has had the goodness besides, to give the name of sin to several of them so that we might enjoy them the more."

All this is delightful enough, and for more one need only turn to Carl Van Doren's biography from which I have taken these anecdotes, but what it points to is as important as it is entertaining.

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It points to Franklin's great capacity to respond to the situation in which he found himself and to play the expected role, to prepare a face to meet the faces that he met. He could, in turn, be the homespun, rustic philosopher or the mocking cavalier, the witty sophist. He knew what was expected of him.

The discovery should not surprise any reader of the *Autobiography*. Throughout it, Franklin insists always on the distinction between appearance and reality, between what he is and what he seems to be.

> In order to secure my credit and character as a tradesman, I took care not only to be in *reality* industrious and frugal, but to avoid all *appearances* of the contrary. I dressed plain and was seen at no places of idle diversion. I never went out a fishing or shooting; a book, indeed, sometimes debauched me from my work, but that was seldom, snug, and gave no scandal; and to show that I was not above my business, I sometimes brought home the paper I purchased at the stores, thro' the streets on a wheelbarrow. Thus being esteemed an industrious, thriving young man, and paying duly for what I bought, the merchants who imported stationery solicited my custom; others proposed supplying me with books, and I went on swimmingly.

Now, with this famous passage, one must be careful. However industrious and frugal Franklin may in fact have been, he knew that for the business of social success virtue counts for nothing without its public dress. In Franklin's world there has to be someone in the woods to hear the tree fall. Private virtue might bring one to stand before the King of kings, but if one wants to sit down and sup with the kings of this world, then one must help them see one's merit. There are always in this world, as Franklin pointed out, "a number of rich merchants, nobility, states, and princes who have need of honest instruments for the management of their affairs, and such being so rare [I] have endeavoured to convince young persons, that no qualities are so likely to make a poor man's fortune as those of probity and integrity."

Yet if one wants to secure one's credit in the world by means of one's character, then the character must be of a piece. There can be no false gesture; the part must be played well. When Franklin drew up his list of virtues they contained, he tells us, only twelve. But a Quaker friend "kindly" informed him that he was generally

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thought proud and overbearing and rather insolent; he proved it by examples. So Franklin added humility to his list; but, having risen in the world and content with the degree of celebrity he had achieved, he could not bring himself to be humble. "I cannot boast of much success in acquiring the *reality* of this virtue, but I had a good deal with regard to the *appearance* of it."

He repeats, at this point, what he had already written in the first part of his story. He forswears all "positive assertion." He drops from his vocabulary such words as "certainly" and "undoubtedly" and adopts a tentative manner. He remembers how he learned to speak softly, to put forward his opinions, not dogmatically, but by saying, " 'I imagine' a thing to be so or so, or 'It so appears to me at present.' " As he had put it to his son earlier, he discovered the Socratic method, "was charmed with it, adopted it, dropped my abrupt contradiction and positive argumentation, and put on the humble enquirer." For good reason: "this habit . . . has been of great advantage to me."

What saves all this in the *Autobiography* from being merely repellent is Franklin's self-awareness, his good humor in telling us about the part he is playing, the public clothes he is putting on to hide what his public will not openly buy. "In reality," he writes, drawing again the distinction from appearance, "there is perhaps no one of our natural passions so hard to subdue as *pride;* disguise it, struggle with it, beat it down, stifle it, mortify it as much as one pleases, it is still alive and will every now and then peep out and show itself. You will see it perhaps often in this history. For even if I could conceive that I had completely overcome it, I should probably be proud of my humility." Here, despite the difference in tone, Franklin speaks like that other and contrasting son of the Puritans, Jonathan Edwards, on the nature of true virtue. Man, if he could achieve virtue, would inevitably be proud of the achievement and so, at the moment of success, fall back into sin.

The difference is, of course, in the tone. The insight is the same but Franklin's skeptical and untroubled self-acceptance is far removed from Edwards' troubled and searching self-doubt. Franklin enjoys the game. Mocking himself, he quietly lures us, in his Yankee deadpan manner, with the very bait he has just described.

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After having told us that he early learned to "put on the humble enquirer" and to affect a self-depreciating pose, he quotes in his support the line from Alexander Pope, "To speak, though sure, with seeming diffidence." Pope, Franklin immediately goes on to say, "might have joined with this line that which he has coupled with another, I think less properly, 'For want of modesty is want of sense.' "

If you ask why *less properly,* I must repeat the lines,

> Immodest words admit of *no defence,*
> *For* want of modesty is want of sense.

Now is not the "want of sense" (where a man is so unfortunate as to want it) some apology for his "want of modesty"? and would not the lines stand more justly thus?

> Immodest words admit *but* this defense
> That want of modesty is want of sense.

This, however, I should submit to better judgements.

Having been so bold as to correct a couplet of the literary giant of the age, Franklin quietly retreats and defers to the judgment of those better able to say than he. Having just described the humble part he has decided to play, he immediately acts it out. If we get the point, we chuckle with him; if we miss the point, that only proves its worth.

But one of the functions of laughter is to dispel uneasiness and in Franklin's case the joke is not enough. Our uneasiness comes back when we stop to remember that he is, as his friends asked him to, writing his story as an efficacious advertisement. We must always ask whether Franklin's disarming candor in recounting how things went on so swimmingly may not be yet another role, still another part he is playing. Actually, even with Yale's sumptuous edition of Franklin's papers, we know little about Franklin's personal life in the early years, except through his own account. The little we do know suggests that his way to wealth and success was not the smooth and open path he would have us believe. This leads us, then, if we cannot answer finally the question who Franklin was, to a different question. What does it mean to say that a character so changeable, so elusive, somehow represents American culture?

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What is there in Franklin's style that makes him, as we say, characteristic?

At the outset in colonial America, with men like John Winthrop, there was always the assumption that one would be called to one's appropriate station in life and labor in it for one's own good and the good of society. Magistrates would be magistrates and printers would be printers. But in the world in which Franklin moved, the magistrates, like Governor Keith of Pennsylvania who sends Franklin off on a wild-goose chase to England, prove to be frauds while the plain, leather-aproned set went quietly about the work of making society possible at all, creating the institutions —the militia, the fire companies, the libraries, the hospitals, the public utilities—that made society habitable. The notion that underlay an orderly, hierarchical society failed to make sense of such a world. It proved impossible to keep people in their place.

One need only consider in retrospect how swiftly Franklin moved upward through the various levels of society to see the openness, the fluidity of his world. Simply because he is a young man with some books, Governor Burnet of New York asks to see him. While in New Jersey on a job printing money he meets and makes friends with all the leaders of that provincial society. In England, at the coffeehouses, he chats with Mandeville and meets the great Dr. Henry Pemberton who was seeing the third edition of Newton's *Principia* through the press. As Franklin said, diligent in his calling, he raised himself by some degree.

The Protestant doctrine of calling, of industriousness in the world, contained dynamite for the orderly, hierarchical, social structure it was originally meant to support. The unintended consequence showed itself within two generations. Those who were abstemious, frugal and hardworking made a success in the world. They rose. And society, rather than the static and closed order in which, in Winthrop's words, "some must be rich some poor, some high and eminent in power and dignitie; others meane and in subieccion," turned out to be dynamic, fluid and open.

If there is much of our national character implicit in Franklin's career, it is because, early in our history, he represents a response to the rapid social change that has remained about the only

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constant in American society. He was the self-made man, the jack-of-all-trades. He taught thirteen rules to sure success and purveyed do-it-yourself kits for those who, like himself, constituted a "rising" people. Franklin stands most clearly as an exemplary American because his life's story is a witness to the uncertainties about social status that have characterized our society, a society caught up in the constant process of change. The question, "Who was Benjamin Franklin?" is a critical question to ask of Franklin because it is the question to which Franklin himself is constantly seeking an answer. In a society in which there are no outward, easily discernible marks of social status, the question always is, as we put it in the title of reference works that are supposed to provide the answer, "Who's Who?"

Along with the uncertainties generated by rapid social mobility, there is another aspect to the difficulty we have in placing Franklin, an aspect that is more complex and harder to state, but just as important and equally characteristic. It takes us back again to the Puritans. In Puritan religious thought there was originally a dynamic equipoise between two opposite thrusts, the tension between an inward, mystical, personal experience of God's grace and the demands for an outward, sober, socially responsible ethic, the tension between faith and works, between the essence of religion and its outward show. Tremendous energy went into sustaining these polarities in the early years but, as the original piety waned, itself undermined by the worldly success that benefited from the doctrine of calling, the synthesis split in two and resulted in the eighteenth century in Jonathan Edwards and Benjamin Franklin, similar in so many ways, yet so radically unlike.

Franklin, making his own world as he makes his way through it, pragmatically rejects the old conundrum whether man does good works because he is saved, or is saved because he does good works. "Vicious actions are not hurtful because they are forbidden, but forbidden because they are hurtful," he decides, and then in an added phrase calmly throws out the God-centered universe of his forebears, "the nature of man alone considered."

Content with his success, blandly sure it must be in the design of Providence that printers hobnob with kings, Franklin simply

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passes by the problem of the relation between reality and appearance. In this world, appearance is sufficient. Humanely skeptical that the essence can ever be caught, Franklin decided to leave the question to be answered in the next world, if there proved to be one. For this world, a "tolerable character" was enough and he "valued it properly." The result was a commonsense utilitarianism which sometimes verges toward sheer crassness. But it worked. For this world, what others think of you is what is important. If Franklin, viewed from the perspective of Max Weber and students of the Protestant ethic, can seem to be the representative, *par excellence,* of the character who internalizes the imperatives of his society and steers his own course unaided through the world, from a slightly different perspective he also turns out to be the other-directed character David Riesman has described, constantly attuned to the expectations of those around him, responding swiftly to the changing situations that demand he play different roles.

We admire, I think, the lusty good sense of the man who triumphs in the world that he accepts, yet at the same time we are uneasy with the man who wears so many masks that we are never sure who is there behind them. Yet it is this, this very difficulty of deciding whether we admire Franklin or suspect him, that makes his character an archetype for our national experience. There are great advantages to be had in belonging to a culture without clearly defined classes, without an establishment, but there is, along with the advantages, a certain strain, a necessary uneasiness. In an open and pluralistic society we have difficulty "placing" people, as we say. Think how often in our kind of society when we meet someone for the first time how our second or third question is apt to be, "What do you do?" Never, "Who are you?" The social role is enough, but in our more reflective moments we realize not so, and in our most reflective moments we realize it will never do for our own selves. We may be able to, but we do not want to go through life as a doctor, lawyer or Indian chief. We want to be ourselves, as we say. And at the beginning of our national experience, Benjamin Franklin not only puts the question that still troubles us in our kind of society, "Who's Who?" He also raises the question that lies at the heart of the trouble: "Who am I?"

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Finale: Presto

PETER DAVISON

"I think I'm going to die," I tried to say.
My husband, standing over the bed, labored
To hear words in the sounds as they emerged.
He shook his head as briskly as a dog
Taking its first steps on land, and acted deaf
To the words he knew he might have heard me speak.
Throughout this evil month I've said the same
To every visitor. It comes out gibberish.
The night nurse, hiding in my room to smoke,
My daughter, prattling anxiously of clothes,
My son weary from four hundred miles
Of travel every weekend—all escape
By smiling, talking, plumping up my pillows.
I wrack myself to utter any word;
They reply, "Dear, I cannot understand you."
If I could move this hand, this leg, I'd write
Or stamp a fury on the sterile floor.
I'd act the eagle. I, who winced at death
If the neighbor's second cousin passed at ninety,
Who bore an ounce of pain so awkwardly
It might have been a ton, who fed myself
With visions of good order in a future
Near enough to reach for—I am cumbered
With armlessness, with leglessness, with silence.
To say the word so anyone could hear it!

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Death, do you hear me, death? The room is empty.
Only the one word now, hearers or no.
I batter at it with convulsive shouts
That resonate like lead. Again. And now—
Listen—it rings out like a miracle.
No one stands near. The corridor is dark.
"Death." I sing the lovely word again,
And footsteps start to chatter down the hall
Towards my bed. I, smiling at every sound,
Know now that no man can arrive in time,
And I, emptying like water from a jug,
Will be poured out before a hand can right me.
That word raised echoes of a halleluia.
Death, do you hear me singing in your key?

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On the Seriousness of the Future

ROBERT L. HEILBRONER

IN AN AGE WHEN MEN HAVE INVENTED MACHINES to melt cities, an age in which war has become the norm and in which the only question is how hot or cold it is to be, it should hardly be necessary to speak of the seriousness of the future.

Yet I do not believe that most of us take the future very seriously. To be sure, it has become a commonplace to say that we face "unprecedented challenges." But the challenges, as we describe them, are not really very impressive. We tell ourselves how grave are the problems ahead and then unfailingly go on to announce that in the end we will surely master them. In a word, the one admission in regard to the future that we are not prepared to make is precisely the one needed to testify to its seriousness—the admission that its problems may be *beyond* our capacity to master them, indeed that they may master us. Thus the talk about challenges is not at bottom an attempt at honest measuring-up. It is mainly pep talk.

As such it is trivial and dangerous talk, diverting our attention from the fact that America in the mid-twentieth century faces challenges that are very likely to exceed its ability to cope with them. And by this I do not mean a defeat by the forces of Communism. I mean a defeat by forces much more formidable than any the Russians can muster—the forces of two revolutions that are fundamentally altering the nature of the world in which we live.

One of these revolutions, to which we shall return, is occurring under our very noses. The other, whose repercussions may well affect us no less intimately, is taking place in a thousand localities no one of which we shall ever visit, in continents and subconti-

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nents that are themselves but remote place-names to most of us. Gunnar Myrdal has called it the Great Awakening. We can think of it as the explosive process by which a billion and a half people, most of them born into societies of ancient and changeless lineament, have suddenly been jolted into an awareness of modern life.

Nothing so grandiose—and nothing so disruptive—has ever before happened in history. The discovery of political identity and the germination of economic aspiration among people who have largely been anonymous and passive since Biblical times have literally opened a new era of history in our day—*world* history. Henceforth, whatever the outcome of the cold war—and certainly in the advent of a hot war—the character of civilization in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries must increasingly reflect the emerging nations and societies of the hitherto quiescent "underdeveloped" world.

We Americans tend to look upon this Great Awakening with sympathetic eyes. We have been horrified to discover the level at which life is lived by three human beings out of four—to learn, for instance, that in bad times the children of the Near East examine the droppings of horses for undigested grains of oats that they can eat. It is only natural for us to wish for an end to such misery, and more than that, to assume that as misery ends, enlightened governments and ideas will begin to prevail.

In the long run we can hope that our faith in the revolutionary Great Awakening will be justified. But in the meantime we forget one all-important fact about it—that it *is* revolutionary. We forget that the long historic transformation to which we give the colorless name "economic development" is not a smooth evolutionary climb. On the contrary, it is a wrenching, disruptive and violent ordeal in which outmoded societies suffer death agonies and new societies the pains of birth.

The agonies and the pains are nowhere absent today in the underdeveloped world. In Africa we see them as tribal societies seek to free themselves from entrenched white oligarchies—and perhaps even harder, from the sapping inertia of their own preindustrial and primitive agricultural ways. In South America we witness the ordeal as the forces of the future fight against feudal

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landholding interests which own ninety percent of the land and do not welcome losing it under the bland title of "land reform." In Asia we find the revolution pitted against poverty, illiteracy and population growth, all on a monstrous scale. In India, for example, some fifty to one hundred million people are currently without jobs. India's present Five-Year Plan—a plan that stretches her developmental abilities to the hilt—aims to provide jobs for ten million of them. But by that time there will be fifteen million additional Indians.

To bring economic development to these societies is not merely a matter of throwing off ancient shackles so as to release untapped energies. The energies themselves must be brought into being. Peasants steeped in age-old tradition must be made into productive farmers. Ragged and undisciplined labor forces must be trained to the exacting tempos of industrial tasks. Bazaar-minded merchants must be taught the outlook of engineers and entrepreneurs. Nepotistic and corrupt government bureaucracies must be remade into efficient civil services. All this generates opposition—not only the opposition of the old orders, the landlords, the remaining imperialists, the aristocrats and petty nobilities, but the resistance of suspicious peasants, uncomprehending city workers, avaricious traders and comfortable officials.

Hence it is not surprising that mild men, mild governments, mild economic systems are not sufficient to galvanize or to sustain the revolution of development. The sophisticated techniques of the democratic process are hardly apt to provide the relentless pressure—perhaps the ruthlessness—without which the painful and protracted transformation of old into new is not likely to materialize. Similarly, the delicate bonds and stimuli of the marketplace are scarcely apt to impel the colossal undertakings of development, many of which in any event will not be profitable business ventures.

This does not mean that the developing countries will necessarily follow the Russian model: few wish to become Communist satellite states. But it surely means that even fewer will seek to follow the model of the United States. As the examples of Egypt, Ghana, Indonesia, Guinea show—not to mention Cuba or China —not democracy but single-party systems, not capitalism but some

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form of "socialism" are apt to be perforce the instruments of guidance and growth for the poor nations.

Herein lies one of the great challenges of the future to the United States. For this revolutionary tendency of world history means that for the first time we find ourselves in an unaccustomed defensive position in the world. No longer are we the leader of the popular "party" of world politics and economics. We are now the leader of the unpopular party. The program that we recommend to the emerging nations—parliamentary democracy and free private enterprise—is not a program that meets their immediate and pressing problems. And this defensive position is complicated by a further consideration. The banners of the development revolution not only bear disturbing political and economic slogans but they are painted in disturbing colors: black, yellow and brown—the colors of the men and women who must carry out its onerous tasks. Not to put too fine a point on it, the development revolution is a *colored* revolution. It will not be easy for a nation that systematically insults the sensibilities of the colored tenth of its population to exert a natural leadership over its course.

A nondemocratic, noncapitalist, nonwhite world provides the external environment in which the United States will have to live for many decades. But what of the internal environment? What of the revolutionary alterations taking place under our noses?

It is not as easy to give a single sharp image to the domestic challenge as to depict in profile the Great Awakening. Let us begin simply by itemizing a few of its various symptoms.

One of these is the spread of the slum. Another seemingly quite different symptom is the rise of enormous concentrations of private economic power: some of our giant corporations, writes Adolph Berle, "can be thought of only in somewhat the way we have hitherto thought of nations." Yet another symptom is the terrifying incursion of science and technology into our daily lives, carelessly rearranging our relationships of privacy and propinquity, our balance with nature, our security at work. Still another symptom is the continuing malfunction of our economy in which four million Americans cannot find jobs. And perhaps most important of all is the level of our public awareness and of our civic

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virtue. Criminality in various forms from dope peddling to income tax evasion is prevalent at every hand. Ignorance of the most crippling sort, worsened by an apathetic indifference to learning, is not only repeatedly revealed by various polls but is observable in the corridors of almost any high school, of all but a handful of colleges.

There is more here than just an ill-tempered list of complaints. These are problems that by common consent vitally affect our way of life. But what is important is to note a characteristic common to all of them. *They do not respond to our existing means of correction and control.* Despite our "best efforts," each year the slums edge out, not in. For all the sporadic Congressional investigations, the power of our giant corporations (and our giant labor unions) to exact a consumer tribute has shown no tendency to decline. We do not even attempt to direct or cushion the impact of most technological change, closing our eyes to its potential for social, ecological or economic harm. For all the talk about promoting economic growth, for five years we have not been able to raise our growth rate above one-third that of Russia. Criminality, so long as it stays within bounds, is accepted by the police and the internal revenue officer alike. There is much lip service to education, but the number—and quality—of schools remains too low, the prestige of education faint, the zeal for knowledge largely noticeable by its absence. Thus in a profound sense our society seems no longer under our control. Running its masterless course, it disposes of us as "it" sees fit and not as we might desire.

Yet there is nothing mysterious about this recalcitrant tendency of so many of our social problems. The great masterless forces around us spring from well-known causes—from the cumulative growth of technology and science, from the associated enlargement of our units of economic life, from our increase in population, from the inevitable tendency of an ever more complex society to outpace the education that presumably prepares one for life in it. All these realities have been with us for a long time. If in our day they have taken on a "revolutionary" quality—a quality that defies our capacity to cope with them—it is only because they have now finally outstripped the restraints and correctives of the past—the marketplace, small local and minimal national government,

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the "good common sense" of the ordinary individual. For it is now clear that these traditional agencies will not solve our problems. They have been unable to clear our slums, discipline our enormous corporations or unions, guide our technology, stimulate our economy, or elevate or educate our people. Instead they have given us, and they will continue to give us, what we have got—a Great Paralysis.

Can this Paralysis be overcome? To do so will require more than a mere scolding, more than a few palliative measures. What is needed is a fundamental change, both of institutions and of outlook, a new balance between private prerogative and public right: in short, a reformation of that social and economic order we call American capitalism.

It is often said that capitalism today represents a great advance over the cruder system of the nineteenth century, and no doubt this is true. And yet where else shall we lay the blame for the Great Paralysis except at the doorstep of the social order that generates it? This is not to claim that the great problems of our time could be solved at one fell swoop by a restructured society, call it socialism or advanced capitalism, or what you will. But they could at least be made the target for wholehearted effort and attack. By way of contrast we must ask what likelihood exists of such an effort under our present system, with its sanctified endorsement of private privilege and its ritualistic shibboleths against public improvement.

To be sure, it can also be claimed that the shortcomings of our system are not traceable to its institutions and ideologies, but to the selfishness, indifference, even stupidity of the people who vote for what they like.

There is no doubt that "the people" must bear their share of responsibility for the Great Paralysis. But where, one must ask, do they get their selfish, indifferent, even stupid notions? Is not the national anthem which they daily hear a singing commercial? Is not the lesson indirectly taught by the barrage of advertising that anything can be artfully written or "sincerely" said—or even believed—for a price? Is not the basic message of most television and magazines that the purpose of life is to have a Good Time? It is not surprising that, living and breathing in such an atmosphere, the

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public thirsts for goods and entertainments and entrusts the exercise of its civic responsibilities to those whose "racket" it is.

Can a society that half-educates and constantly diverts its citizenry, that extols nearly all private and denigrates nearly all public activity, that addresses itself to the problems of the future in the language of the past—can such a society find an adequate response to the challenge of the Great Awakening or to that of the Great Paralysis? I find it hard to answer the question affirmatively.

This does not mean, to repeat an earlier assurance, that there is reason to fear an American defeat at the hands of Russia or China. The implications of our impotence are less dramatic, but no less fraught with sobering long-term consequences. On the one hand there impends the prospect of our "encirclement" by the noncapitalist, nondemocratic, nonwhite nations now attempting the first stages of the long ascent. A nation whose dominant economic interest is tied to corporate profit and whose general public awareness is tethered to the level of the mass media is hardly apt to understand, much less to communicate with, such a world. Rather than expediting the revolution through its long and harsh period of trial toward ultimate goals of human decency, it is apt to feel out of step with and threatened by events, to shrink within itself, to turn away from the ugly spectacle. The revolution will become no less ugly as a result. The damage would be done to the United States—both to its long-run potential influence for world evolution and to its immediate state of conscience as an island of wealth in a sea of poverty.

At home the prospect is one of floundering—of an inability to do what must be done. The likelihood is that the great structural problems of society will continue to go unsolved, that they will continue to work their damage on us, both as individuals and as a collectivity, that the Great Paralysis will continue.

Of course one can hope that none of this will come true. I do. But it is not so easy to expect that it will not come true. And that is what I mean by taking the future seriously.

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Jewish Radicals, Jewish Writers

ALLEN GUTTMANN

NO ONE DOUBTS THAT THE AMERICAN JEW has, from the 1870's to the present, played a conspicuous part in the drama of radical politics in the United States. The role of the American Jew—as anarchist, as socialist, as Communist—has, however, been misunderstood by anti-Semites, by celebrators of Jewishness, and even by scholars determined neither to praise nor to blame. It is an unrecognized fact that American Jews who rejected the political *status quo* have also rejected Jehovah and Torah and Talmud. Their radicalism has involved the abandonment rather than the intensification of their faith in Judaism as a religion. To misunderstand this is to misunderstand both Judaism *and* radicalism. To understand the important and misunderstood "Jewish radical," one must see the disparity between political radicalism and Judaism as a religion. Having seen this, having adopted a religious rather than an ethnic or racial definition of Judaism, one can go on ambivalently to predict an early end to the remarkable postwar renaissance of Jewish writers in America.

Emma Goldman is perhaps the most famous of American radicals. Shortly after her friend Alexander Berkman was imprisoned for an abortive attempt to assassinate the chairman of the strike-bound Carnegie Steel Company in 1892, Emma Goldman herself was sentenced to a year on Blackwell's Island. "The prison," wrote Emma in her autobiography, was "the crucible that tested my faith." But the faith was not the Judaism of her ancestors. It was anarchism. It was her faith in anarchism that inspired her to denounce the government of the United States until her deportation in 1919. It was that faith that led her to disillusionment with the Soviet Union, and brought her, after more than the Biblical

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forty years, to the Promised Land of the Spanish Civil War. When, in 1893, the head matron of Blackwell's Island asked Emma for her religion, "Red" Emma answered, "None, I am an atheist." Earlier, in another prison, another matron had offered her a Bible: "Indignantly I flung the volume at the matron's feet. I had no need of religious lies; I wanted some human book." Despite Emma's violence in this particular incident, her relation to Judaism was remarkably calm. She never rebelled; she simply came to ignore the traditions and the beliefs that were, supposedly, her heritage. For a man like James Joyce, the Catholicism he rejected meant almost everything. He would have been unthinkable without the Church he hated. Emma Goldman's *Living My Life,* an autobiography of 993 pages, does not even dramatize Emma's fall from Jehovah and His commandments.

Alexander Berkman, the anarchist who made the attempt on Henry Clay Frick's life, shared Emma Goldman's faith in anarchism and her antagonism to religious orthodoxy. He had as a child refused to attend Jewish schools and had been expelled from a Russian *Gymnasium* when he wrote a rather direct essay entitled, "There Is No God." While imprisoned in America, he wrote his unrepentant *Prison Memoirs of an Anarchist* (which Emma Goldman published). In his memoirs he denounced "religion" as "the very fountain-head of bigotry and injustice." There is nothing in the book to indicate that Berkman identified himself as a Jew. The last section of the memoirs is entitled "Resurrection," but the metaphor applies to his release from prison, to his rebirth to the radical movement that was his very life.

Daniel DeLeon, the radical who "Americanized" Marx and led the Socialist Labor Party in its heyday, went beyond Berkman and Goldman. He denied his Jewish background literally and invented a family tree of Catholic forebears! Few radicals went this far. Nevertheless, as Moses Rischin reminds us in his recent history of Jews in the "promised city" of New York, the typical socialist or anarchist was a man who transferred his commitments from Moses to Marx. *Zukunft,* most distinguished of Yiddish periodicals, adopted a militantly atheistic position. The *Freie Arbeiter Shtimme* did the same, and published David Edelstadt's poem, "Anti-Religion":

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Börne, Lasalle, Marx
Will deliver us from the diaspora
The world will recognize no distinctions
All will be free, whether Turk, Christian or Jew
Every age has its sacred message
Ours is freedom and justice.

Abraham Cahan, editor of *Forward* and generally recognized as the most important of radical journalists, wrote the parable of Reb Nehemiah: "I had ears but could not hear, because of my ear-locks; I had eyes and could not see because they were closed in prayer. . . . I am Rabbi Nehemiah no longer, they call me Nehemiah the atheist now." And even Samuel Gompers, who can hardly be called a radical at all, turned from Judaism to membership in the Ethical Culture Society.

Despite their quarrel with Jehovah, many of the radicals of the 1890's were linguistically restricted to Yiddish, and to an audience that spoke Yiddish. The generation that supplied recruits to the Communist Party was not so restricted. Men like Joseph Freeman, Michael Gold and Howard Fast were born or reared in America; they spoke and wrote English; their ties to Judaism were even looser than those of the nineteenth-century radicals. Here is Joseph Freeman, the American Communist whose autobiography, *An American Testament,* is one of the few classics of the proletarian movement in American literature: "From my uncle Moishe I heard about the revolution; from grandfather about God and the destiny of the Jewish race. No two ideals could be more sharply at odds. Uncle wanted the whole of humanity to go forward; grandfather wanted his own people, a fragment of humanity, to go backward. . . ." Attentive readers predict Freeman's commitment to Uncle Moishe's ideals. As a convinced Marxist, Freeman's loyalties went to the worker, not to the Jew. "In the last analysis, it was obviously not race against race, or nation against nation: it was class against class." The failure of Freeman's faith in Jehovah is treated in one paragraph, in a book of 576 pages.

Michael Gold's autobiography, *Jews Without Money,* is a vividly compassionate re-creation of the Lower East Side. The book ends with the Prophet, but not the prophet of the Lord:

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A man on an East Side soap-box, one night, proclaimed that out of the despair, melancholy and helpless rage of millions, a world movement had been born to abolish poverty. . . . I listened to him. . . . O workers' Revolution, you brought hope to me, a lonely, suicidal boy. You are the true Messiah. You will destroy the East Side when you come, and build there a garden for the human spirit. O Revolution, that forced me to think, to struggle and to live, O great Beginning!

A third Communist, Howard Fast, indicated his lack of sympathy for "the Jewish heritage" in a symposium conducted in February of 1944 by the *Contemporary Jewish Record:*

For me, a Jew is a man. He is persecuted; so are other minorities. He is libeled; so are others. There is discrimination against him; is there none against the Negroes? He has been murdered, tortured, driven across the face of the earth, but isn't that the fate of millions who are not Jewish?

The road for Joseph Freeman, Michael Gold, Howard Fast, Charles Ruthenberg, Benjamin Gitlow and a thousand others now forgotten led not to Damascus but, figuratively, to the Finland Station. The crossroads was neither the abandonment of Orthodoxy nor the disillusionment with *laissez-faire* capitalism; the typical crisis for "Jewish" radicals of the 1930's was the conversion-experience that transformed them from Stalinists into Trotskyites.

In 1944, after World War II had burned away the harshest memories of the Depression Decade, at a time when Hitler's genocide made many anxious to assert their kinship with European Jews, the *Contemporary Jewish Record* queried "the younger generation" of American Jews on their relationship to Judaism and "Jewishness." Most of the respondents were or had been involved in political radicalism; most of them were decidedly unsympathetic to Judaism and Jewishness. Out of contemporary Judaism, argued Lionel Trilling, "there has come not a single voice with the note of authority—of philosophical, or poetic, or even of rhetorical, let alone of religious authority."

In the 1960's, after the collapse of political radicalism in the United States, American Jews continue to supply much of the support for such independently socialist magazines as *Dissent* and *New Politics*. Daniel Aaron, Daniel Bell, Saul Bellow, Herbert

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Gold, Paul Goodman, Irving Howe, Alfred Kazin, Norman Mailer, Leo Marx, Philip Rahv, David Riesman, Philip Roth, J. D. Salinger, Morris Schappes, Harvey Swados and Lionel Trilling—to name a mixed handful—are among the foremost and often the angriest critics of American minds, morals and possibilities. Despite their Jewish backgrounds, none of these men is noted for affirmation of Judaism as a religion. When these men praise Jews, they are more than likely to praise the great dissenters—Spinoza, Marx, Freud, Trotsky, Einstein. As Raziel Abelson commented in a recent symposium (*Commentary,* April, 1961):

> It is this aspect of Jewish history, whose heroic figures are Spinoza, Marx, Freud, and Einstein, to which I feel most directly linked. Consequently, the Orthodox Jew, steeped in the medieval traditions of the ghetto, the Reform Jew who . . . tries to bring ancient traditions "up to date," and the dedicated Zionist . . . all seem to me to ignore the role that the modern Jew is best qualified to perform—namely, that of spokesman for rationally organized, democratic world society, unfettered by parochial traditions and superstitions.

Of all "Jewish" radicals, Morris U. Schappes, author of documentary and pictorial histories of American Jews and editor of *Jewish Currents,* has made the most significant attempt at a reconciliation of Jewishness and political radicalism. He does this with an ardent defense of the "secular view of Jewish life" in which the values of Marxism are redefined as *Jewish* values. *Jewish Currents* is a monthly defense of social justice and of Yiddish culture. The magazine contains eloquent appeals for Morton Sobell and bitter denunciations of racial segregation and perfunctory notices of Jewish holidays. The magazine is conspicuously empty of theological concern. The editors' dogged reiteration of the compatibility of Judaism and Marxism forces the reader to ask the inevitable question: what then is a Jew?

Racial definitions are quite unsatisfactory. Can we define Jews as all men descended from the tribes of Israel? No. Leaving aside the rather complicated problem in genealogy, we quickly discover that the concept of "Semitism" is completely unworkable. Even if we assume that the tribes of Israel were of a single physical type,

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we must admit that the type was not unique to the tribes of Israel, that the religious leaders of Judaism have always accepted converts and without reference to physical characteristics, and that the Jewish community today includes Abyssinians, Chinese and Swedes—none of whom conforms to the outlines of the physical stereotype.

At the opposite extreme is sociological permissiveness. A Jew is anyone who thinks himself a Jew or is thought by others to be one. What then do we do when Adolf Eichmann's defenders label "Jewish" a man whose paternal grandfather was a Jew converted to Christianity? What do we do when a respected historian decides —and this is rather too much of a good thing—that Columbus was a Jew? What do we say when Jews converted to Catholicism still think of themselves as Jews—even as they are denied entrance, as Jews, to Israel?

A variant of the sociological permissive argument is the reference to "scientifically established characteristics," or, as a close friend of mine once said to me in anger, "A Jew is anyone who acts like a Jew." Although better than Bernard Malamud's assertion that all men are Jews (because all men are victims of a world they never made), the formulation is inadequate. First, find the archetypal Jew by which to measure all the others. Is it Moses or Abraham, Maimonides or Spinoza, Disraeli or Proust, Gompers or Durkheim or—worse still—the statistical average of the Yemenese Jewish Community? Second, what characteristic of the Standard Jew is significant for the definition? Jews of Scarsdale, New York, seem rather different from the Jews of the *shtetl* of *Mitteleuropa.* Indian Jews adhere to caste; Jews in Morocco share most of their customs with their Moslem neighbors.

The obvious answer to the problem of definition is that Jews share an acceptance of Judaism as a religion. A Jew is anyone who attempts to obey the Law of Jehovah as set forth in the Torah. That anything so obvious need be argued—a Jew believes in Jehovah—suggests the confusion of current discussions. American Jews have much in common *because* of their faith, as a *consequence* of their Judaism. If Jews are a people, it is because they are a people of the Book, and not because many of them lived once in central Europe and spoke a language derived from German. No one

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has gone further than Mordecai Kaplan in arguing that Judaism is a civilization that includes "history, literature, language, social organization, folk sanctions, standards of conduct, social and spiritual ideals, esthetic values. . . ." But even Kaplan recognizes that Judaism, of all civilizations, "can least afford to omit religion. . . . If the glory of a civilization consists in the uniqueness of its contribution to human culture, then religion was, and will remain, the glory of the Jewish civilization. Take religion out and Judaism becomes an empty shell." Bagels, lox and the speech patterns of Yiddish are part of the heritage. To think of them as the essence of Jewishness is sentimentally heretical.

And slovenly. Such slovenly thought leads to the slapdash term, "Jewish radicalism." There is, except in the form of Zionism, little evidence of *Jewish* radicalism in American history. The radicalism of Emma Goldman and a host of others is actually the exodus of those who rejected both Judaism and the political, economic and religious orthodoxies of the society in which they lived. Failure to hold to this simple idea has confused sociological studies and turned historical accounts into folksy lists of Who's Who in Brownsville, Cambridge and Hollywood. Blurred definitions allow discussion of Daniel DeLeon, Joseph Freeman and others, as though they were slightly more extreme versions of Kaufman Kohler and Isaac Wise. The difference is a difference in kind. We shall not understand radicals of Jewish background if we rely on histories of the first Sephardic communities in America, or on studies, excellent as they are, of "Some Characteristics of Detroit Area Jewish and Non-Jewish Adults."

It is, of course, undeniable that most of the political radicals mentioned in this essay continued, despite their atheism, to think of themselves as Jews and to identify themselves as Jews.* Many secularists today feel an intense commitment to a Jewish background almost without influence on their daily behavior. Arguments that Jehovah, Torah and Talmud are the *sine qua non* of

* Few American radicals of Jewish background have gone as far as Leon Trotsky. Asked once, "When it comes to classifying yourself, you certainly cannot ignore the fact of national allegiance. You consider yourself, I take it, to be either a Russian or a Jew." "No!" cried Trotsky, "you are mistaken! I am a Social Democrat, and that's all!" This is the ultimate in ideology: to *define* oneself by a political position.

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Judaism are quite unlikely to transform the sense of identity of "Jewish atheists": the atheistic children of Jewish parents continue, for good reasons as well as for bad ones, to think of themselves as Jews. If, however, we wish to understand American radicalism, we must look not at American Jews but at a small group of Americans of Jewish background who abandoned the essentials of their heritage and clung, if they clung at all, to an immigrant's trunkful of tattered customs. If we wish to understand the radical tradition that has grown out of post-Emancipation Judaism, we must see the emancipated Jew as, in Isaac Rosenfeld's phrase, "the marginal man." If we wish to understand the tradition of dissent, Thorstein Veblen's essay on "The Intellectual Pre-Eminence of Jews in Modern Europe" is worth a thousand pious essays on the Old Testament origins of Democracy, Liberalism, Socialism, Separation of Powers, Equality of the Sexes and the Comic Spirit.

Despite the richness of the Jewish heritage, argues Veblen, "the later generations of home-bred Jewish scholars . . . have run into lucubrations that have no significance for contemporary science or scholarship at large." (He might have added that the Talmudic tradition has had little effect on contemporary literature or politics.)

> It appears to be only when the gifted Jew escapes from the cultural environment created and fed by the particular genius of his own people, only when he falls into the alien lines of gentile inquiry and becomes a naturalized, though hyphenate, citizen in the gentile republic of learning, that he comes into his own as a creative leader in the world's intellectual enterprise. It is by loss of allegiance, or at best by force of a divided allegiance to the people of his origin, that he finds himself in the vanguard of modern inquiry. . . . The young Jew finds his own heritage of usage and outlook untenable. . . . The idols of his own tribe have crumbled in decay and no longer cumber the ground, but that release does not induce him to set up a new line of idols borrowed from an alien tribe to do the same disservice. By consequence he is in a peculiar degree exposed to the unmediated facts of the current situation. . . . In short, he is a skeptic by force of circumstances over which he has no control.

He is, in the current jargon, doubly alienated. He is Isaac Rosenfeld's "specialist in alienation." Every Jew in Christendom knows

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what many Christians never know—that there is more than one Answer. The intellectual of Jewish background knows still more. He knows that there are at least two Answers, and that neither of them will do. He is the wanderer who must create the Zion he can return to.

There are many explanations for the near collapse of political radicalism after the Second World War. For excellent and well-known reasons, Communism no longer attracts the intellectual. Whatever the pull of democratic socialism, the magnetic attraction of the Kremlin is next to nil. Furthermore, the economic reforms of the New Deal and the relative prosperity of the 1950's and 1960's have done much to reduce the evils against which radicals have fought. These two factors are widely recognized in discussions of the decline of the Left. Most observers are also ready to agree that a changed intellectual climate, symbolized by the Smith and McCarran Acts and by the late Senator McCarthy, has made radical dissent unpopular. A fourth factor deserves attention: the decline of Orthodox Judaism and the rapid assimilation of Jews into American society. The Jewish intellectual anatomized by Veblen cannot possibly be alienated from both "the idols of his own tribe" and the idols of the Gentiles when the idols of both Gentile and Jew become, for all practical purposes, indistinguishable. As Leonard Baskin brilliantly comments, in a recent symposium in *Judaism,* the Jews have been "a community of disaster" saved by the Diaspora and now paradoxically threatened with ruination because of the decline of anti-Semitism.

Assimilation has been swift. The average Jew—in dream if not in reality—has deserted Orthodoxy for the suburbs. For him, Herman Wouk is the Jewish substitute for literature. For his wife, Schrafft's is *déclassé.* "The ladies gathered for Hadassah's tea," observes Oscar Handlin at the end of his history of American Judaism, "stepped out of the pages of *Vogue.*" Jews came to America because America was the new Eden, and—subject to the usual qualifications—America has been paradise enough. Judaism is now, as Will Herberg wittily demonstrates, one of the three great Access Roads to the American Way. Protestant, Catholic, Jew—

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one is as good as another because each becomes ever more vacuously like the others. In Leonard Baskin's words, "The extraordinary culture bred of the ghetto is doomed. . . . Where would *they* find the Jews if *they* wanted to 'make' a pogrom? In the Cabinet? It just wouldn't look nice. Our minority status (our chief treasure) itself is threatened. Yiddish, alas, is practically gone, intermarriage is common, and for every poor and huddled *mikvah* there is a ten-hundred of swimming pools." Herbert Gold, in the *Commentary* symposium of 1961, summarizes: "Chicken soup and Yiddish jokes will tarry awhile. But the history of the Jews from now on will be one with the history of everybody else."

Other witnesses attest to the same truth, and Philip Roth has begun to chronicle the far-from-radical world of the assimilated Jew, the world we must understand if we are to appreciate the failure of radical politics and the success of the newest modes of "Jewish" dissent. Neil Klugman, hero of Roth's *Goodbye, Columbus,* discovers that the Patimkin family, fat from war profits on Patimkin Kitchen and Bathroom Sinks, is more Gentile than the goyim. Brenda Patimkin and her brother are anything but alienated. Both are aptly described as members of the Young Jewish Athletic Set. They live in an affluent society equidistant from Lower East Side and from Marxist Utopia of Worker and Peasant. It is as though Roth wanted to illustrate Harvey Swados' contention that the Jew has become the most typical American. In Roth's novel, *Letting Go,* the hero is incited, by a *shikse* from Kenosha, to proclaim himself her Trotsky, her Einstein, her Moses Maimonides, but he knows that he's none of these and was not meant to be. Like Augie March and Henderson, the Rain King, Gabe Wallach is Everyman in the twentieth century. In other stories, Roth denounces Jews who use a faked Judaism as a gimmick, and for whom the entry of a Yeshiva into the suburbs is a calamity comparable to Satan's famous arrival in the Garden. When a suburban Jew drives his child to Bible stories in Scarsdale, he learns that "this Abraham in the Bible was going to kill his own kid for a *sacrifice!* You call that religion . . . ? I call it sick. Today a guy like that they'd lock him up." Had the author intruded himself in Gide's fashion, he might have asked Paul Goodman's probing question: "Shall we describe Father Abraham without the knife . . . ?"

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The literary evidence of the end of Orthodoxy is supported by sociological studies. Orthodoxy all but disappears in three generations. An example from an essay contained in Marshall Sklare's collection, *The Jews:* in Milwaukee, sixty-seven percent of the first generation kept the Sabbath; twelve percent of the second generation do so; in the third generation, only two percent of married sons keep the Sabbath. Of the Milwaukee Orthodox, fifty-nine and one-tenth percent believe that Orthodox congregations will soon become Conservative. My own guess—which runs counter to ardent claims and some evidence of a recent revival of traditionalism among intellectuals—is that Conservative congregations will gradually resemble those Reform groups that have already become indistinguishable from the local Unitarian Society.

The symposium published in *Commentary* (April, 1961) included comments from thirty-one men and women identified as "Jewish intellectuals." Although one teacher of theology argued, correctly, that Judaism without God was "idolatrous tribalism," the majority identified themselves as atheists with only the most tenuous connections to the Jewish community. Most showed some sympathy with Judaism: "I have a memory of a noble religion," writes Barbara Probst Solomon, "in which I no longer believe, nor was taught to believe, and of a heroic struggle in which I have never participated." Philip Roth's statement is even more direct:

> I cannot find a true and honest place in the history of believers that begins with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob on the basis of the heroism of these believers, or of their humiliations and anguish. I can only connect with them . . . as I apprehend their God. And until such time as I do apprehend him, there will continue to exist between myself and those others who seek his presence, a question . . . which for all the pain and longing it may engender, for all the disappointment and bewilderment it may produce, cannot be swept away by nostalgia or sentimentality or even by blind and valiant effort of the will: how are you connected to me as another man is not?

One need hardly come from a Jewish family to assent to Roth's statement, or to join in the criticism of American society voiced today by intellectuals of a Jewish background.

Partly, perhaps, as an answer to *Commentary's* symposium,

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Judaism, the magazine of the American Jewish Congress, published "Symposium: My Jewish Affirmation," a group of statements drawn largely from men institutionally connected with Judaism, from teachers of theology, editors of religious journals, authors of books on Judaism. These men show far less dissatisfaction with American society, and far more awareness of the centrality of Jehovah and the Law. Michael Wyschogrod argues that Judaism is "the election of the seed of Abraham as the nation of God, the imposition upon this people of a series of commandments which express God's will for the conduct of His people, and the endless struggle by this people against its election. . . ." Jews who attempt to redefine Judaism as a secular tradition will see their children or grandchildren "lose their interest in any form of Jewish life and thereby make unnecessary the diverse 'reinterpretations' so prevalent today."

But what of Alfred Kazin, whom Norman Podhoretz, editor of *Commentary* and introducer of the symposium in *Commentary,* cites as the very symbol of the old radical in a newly "affirmative stance"? Kazin walks the city where he was born and, in 1951, discovers his rage is "mixed with dread and some unexpected tenderness." He misses "all those ratty little wooden tenements, born with the smell of the damp in them." Kazin praises Jewishness: "We had always to be together: believers and non-believers, we were a people; I was of that people. Unthinkable to go one's own way, to doubt or to escape the fact that I was a Jew. . . . We had all of us lived together so long that we would not have known how to separate even if we had wanted to. The most terrible word was *aleyn,* alone." But the book ends with Kazin's boyhood love of Yeshua, whom Pontius Pilate, with some reluctance, crucified. The book ends with a nostalgic account of the desperate struggle to escape from Brownsville. "I knew somewhere in myself that a Ryder, an Emily Dickinson, an Eakins, a Whitman . . . were alien, too, alien in the deepest way . . . nevertheless, I still thought of myself then as standing outside America. I read as if books would fill my every gap, legitimize my strange quest for the American past, remedy my every flaw, let me in at last into the great world that was anything just out of Brownsville." Whatever tenderness is

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now mixed with his rage, Kazin's quest for the American past brought him, as he hoped, into the "great world" beyond the ghetto, made him Veblen's "naturalized citizen of the gentile republic of learning." In his first book, *On Native Grounds,* Kazin praises the most un-Hebraic William Dean Howells and argues that Veblen's analysis of the Jewish intellectual is a self-portrait of Veblen. It would be equally fair to say that Kazin himself is doubly alien, a classic instance of Veblen's Jew. Kazin is also, for good or for evil, representative of the end of a tradition. Assimilation and the end of anti-Semitism means the disappearance of the ghetto, an end to "Jewish" radicalism as we have known it in America, an end perhaps even to the peculiar form of nostalgia that pervades Kazin's autobiography.

If twofold alienation is one prerequisite for "Jewish" radicalism and for the remarkable tradition of dissent, what else can be the fate of "Jewish" radicalism in America where the archetypal Jew, Ronald Patimkin, dribbles out to sink another for Ohio State? It is plain, even to a very timid Jeremiah, that the extraordinary postwar outburst of literary dissent will, as an identifiably *Jewish* renaissance, be as short-lived as the now defunct tradition of foreign-language political radicalism. Americans of Jewish origins will undoubtedly continue to dissent. But their dissent will be directed more and more at American values rather than at political institutions. Their dissent will be more and more akin to that of, for instance, Benjamin DeMott or Mary McCarthy or Stuart Hughes. As American Jews become more and more like American Protestants and Catholics, their radical children will continue to take, in Isaac Rosenfeld's phrase, "passage from home." They will, I suspect, continue to be guided by the examples of Marx, Freud, Einstein and others, but their fellow travelers are likely to be other men and women of goodwill who join them in their quests for the American Past, the New Eden, the Good Society, or simply a sane nuclear policy. When American Jews turn in anger on these radicals for whom Torah and Talmud are as alien as they were for Emma Goldman, surely the descendents of Levi will rise to read again from Leviticus, to remind the Orthodox that they too were once strangers in the land of Egypt.

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A Story about Chicken Soup

Louis Simpson

In my grandmother's house there was always
chicken soup
And talk of the old country—mud and boards,
Poverty,
The snow falling down the necks of lovers.

Now and then, out of her savings
She sent them a dowry. Imagine
The rice-powdered faces!
And the smell of the bride, like chicken soup.

But the Germans killed them.
I know it's in bad taste to say it,
But it's true. The Germans killed them all.

*

In the ruins of Berchtesgaden
A child with yellow hair
Ran out of a doorway.

A German girl-child—
Cuckoo, all skin and bones—
Not even enough to make chicken soup.
She sat by the stream and smiled.

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Then as we splashed in the sun
She laughed at us.
We had killed her mechanical brothers,
So we forgave her.

*

The sun is shining.
The shadows of the lovers have disappeared.
They are all eyes; they have some demand on me;
They want me to be more serious than I want to be.

They want me to stick in their mudhole
Where no one is elegant.
They want me to wear old clothes,
They want me to be poor, to sleep in a room
with many others—

Not to walk in the painted sunshine
To a summer house,
But to live in the tragic world forever.

✪ LOUIS SIMPSON's new book of poems, *At the End of the Open Road,* has just been published by the Wesleyan University Press. Mr. Simpson is the author of four books of verse, a novel—*Riverside Drive*—and a study of James Hogg.
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The God in the Flowerpot

MARY BARNARD

HERE IS A CACTUS PLANT in a flowerpot; it is small, spineless, grayish, apparently inedible and hardly a thing of beauty by any aesthetic standard. The botanist would recognize it as *Lophophora williamsii*. The scientist engaged in pharmaceutical research might identify it as a source of the drug called mescaline. Wyoming Indians refer to it among themselves as "the medicine," using that word in its double meaning as a cure for illness and a source of supernatural power. The Tarahumara Indians of Mexico call it *hikuli,* and the Aztecs called it *peyotl.* To the white men who are familiar with it, the peyote cactus is a plant containing an interesting assortment of alkaloids in varying proportions. To the Indians who use it in religious ceremonies it is often more than a "medicine," it is a god. The plant, which has a limited range in extremely arid, almost uninhabited country along the Mexican border, is the object of annual pilgrimages by the Tarahumara, who must make a journey of several days on foot to collect it. Oklahoma and Wyoming Indians import the dried "button" or raise peyote in pots. Whenever possible it is eaten fresh, without preparation; the dried button may be powdered, pounded into paste or made into tea. The god, being rendered fit for eating, presides over the meeting where peyote is taken and "sends" the songs sung and the visions seen by the members who partake of this sacrament. The peyote cult is not based on a written or spoken Word, but on the experience of the members during the communion.

My hypothetical flowerpot might have contained any one of a dozen plants, for instance, the Texas mountain laurel whose seeds are known as "mescal beans," several varieties of Datura including

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the jimsonweed of the American Southwest, certain lianas of the South American forests, a kava (awa) plant from Polynesia, the soma of ancient India, the haoma of the Parsis, the coca of Peru, or Indian hemp—the source of marijuana and hashish. The opium poppy would probably not be out of place. Several species of hallucinogenic mushrooms belong in the list, or would belong if they could be induced to grow in pots. I have used the American peyote because it is perhaps the most thoroughly documented of all these plants, none of which is valued for its vitamins or caloric content. All are drug plants: they inebriate, soothe pain or function as mind-changers. Some of them are open doors to the otherworld, and as such they have religious uses. They are sacred plants, magic herbs or shrubs, magic carpets on which the spirit of the shaman can travel through time and space. Like shamanism, which has been described as a religious technique rather than a religion in itself, the magic plants are vehicles for a special kind of experience adaptable to the use of most religions that acknowledge an otherworld and permit its exploration.

If there were such a field as theo-botany, the study of these plants and their cults would be work for a theo-botanist. As it is, little has been published in the way of comparative studies, perhaps for the very good reason that the scholar who attempts such a study must step out of his own field into four or five others, and thereby risk his reputation. Laymen, therefore, who have no prestige to lose, burst in where scholars fear to tread, and here am I. My own interest is in the mythology of the drug plants, and my approach has been by way of mythology, a study as perilous to the scholar as theo-botany. The hazards have therefore seemed less and the facts, such as we have, reassuringly firm. My approach to the subject was inadvertent, almost accidental; my experience that of one who has been treading water interminably and feels solid ground beneath his feet at last. Half a dozen important mythological themes—the shaman's journey, the food of immortal life, the food of occult knowledge, the fate of the disembodied soul, the communication with the dead, plant-deities—all converge on this point: that is, on some actual food (usually a drug plant) ritually consumed, *not* symbolically but for the experience it confers. Most of these drug

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plants are what Aldous Huxley calls "mind-changers." The experience differs according to the drug or mixture of drugs and alcohol taken by the shaman, the initiate or the communicant whoever he may be. He may fall into a coma lasting for a day or more; he may be awake, but anesthetized; his mind and body may be stimulated to wakefulness and fatigue dispelled so that he can perform feats of endurance quite impossible without the assistance of the drug. He may experience color visions of varying intensity. Euphoria, quickened or dulled sensation, a displaced center of consciousness seemingly *outside* the body, a sense of enormously protracted time and extended space, and a feeling of weightlessness, of escape from the forces of gravity, are among the possible effects. Usually the communicant fasts for a day or longer before taking the peyote, soma, mushroom or extract of jimsonweed. One good reason for the fast is of course the quicker and more powerful action of the drug on an empty stomach.

Bearing these facts in mind, let us return to the peyote and its mythology. So far as I know there is only one peyote myth, although there are many variations on the single theme. Since the peyote tradition has moved outward from the very limited peyote-growing region, the myth has presumably been passed along with the dried plants and the ritual. The peyote myth tells how an Indian (or several Indians—number, age, sex and condition varying according to the particular version) is lost or wounded and left for dead in an uninhabited desert region. Starving, thirsty, at the end of his strength, he stumbles upon the peyote. A voice tells him to eat it. He eats it and feels his strength miraculously restored. His hunger and thirst are alleviated, and he is able to make his way back to his people, to whom he bears the word of a new god sent to heal their suffering. Usually the Indian hears a voice directing him to eat the plant, or sees a godlike form in the shape of an Indian brave standing where the plant stood; in some versions he is given instructions by Peyote himself on the proper performance of the peyote ritual. Peyote has been used to prolong the endurance of dancers, to alleviate pain, to produce visions, to give courage in warfare and generally as a means of healing and communion in the peyote cults.

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There are several points of almost equal importance in this brief summary. One is that the first man to eat peyote was very likely on the verge of starvation in that arid region where the plant grows. It is so unpalatable in appearance, so difficult to chew and swallow, that only a ravenously hungry man would be likely to make the effort. The lack of food plants in the peyote-growing area makes this hypothesis still more plausible. Furthermore, if a hungry man were to eat the fresh peyote he would almost certainly have a startling experience similar to the one described in the myth. His strength would be restored in an apparently miraculous manner and he would probably have hallucinations of some sort—visual or auditory or both. The peyote ritual, which presumably took shape gradually, was later attributed to the personified peyote, a god who was said to have revealed himself in a vision.

If the reader supposes that I am using the myth to shed light on the origins of the peyote cult, he is mistaken; I am using the *Lophophora williamsii* and all we know about it to shed light on the myth. It should be obvious at once that if we lift the myth from its cultural context, and substitute the word "cactus" or even "plant of life" for the word "peyote," the tale might quickly find its way into collections of myths and folklore concerned with *imaginary* fruits, leaves, roots or stalks that are sought over the earth, guarded by dragons, used to inspire poets, to lend strength to the arm of the warrior or renew the youth of the immortal gods. Should we conclude, then, that the myth of peyote's discovery is one variant on an almost universal theme attributable to the almost universal sameness of the unconscious mind? Or is it possible that the plants in the other myths are not necessarily imaginary? Are they, perhaps, real plants in imaginary gardens? Perhaps their mythical uses are derived from their cult use, and extended by hyperbole until the plant itself becomes mythical in the songs and retold tales.

The soma-drink of the Hindus was made from a real plant upon which the soma cult rested just as the Plains Indian or Tarahumara peyote cult rests upon the peyote plant. The soma plant, pounded, soaked, and wrung out of a strainer, provided a drink that was inebriating even without fermentation. The soma was deified as

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the god Soma, who inspired seers and poets and fortified the warrior. The kava-drink of Polynesia was prepared in much the same way from the kava plant (*Piper mythysticum,* "intoxicating pepper") and was used as a ritual drink, as a libation poured to the gods, and as a trance-inducing beverage for the soothsayers. Both these plants have heavenly counterparts that provide a tipple for the gods. In other words, they have a mythology, and a much more extensive mythology than that of the peyote plant. The jimsonweed, prepared by maceration and mixed with water in a ceremonial bowl, was formerly used by some California Indians during initiations, when the novice was expected to see visions and gain shamanistic power. It, too, has its mythology. The sacred mushrooms of Oaxaca are taken raw, on an empty stomach, like the fresh peyote. When the shaman has swallowed the mushroom, the mushroom-deity takes possession of the shaman's body and speaks with the shaman's lips. The shaman does not say whether the sick child will live or die; the *mushroom says.* Some Indians say of sacred plants used by their shaman, that the soul of an ancestor has entered the plant; it is he who takes possession of the shaman and speaks through his mouth. The oracle at Delphi chewed laurel leaves for the same effect; in a state of inebriation induced by a small amount of cyanide in the laurel, she surrendered to the god (in this case Apollo), who used her as his instrument. His will was made known through her utterances delivered in trance and interpreted by the attendant priests. The laurel was, of course, sacred to Apollo.

Apollo, like the Norse god Woden and most shamans of whatever race or sect, was associated with healing as well as divination or prophecy. The same plant that brings visions or otherworld experiences may alleviate pain. Even if it does not, the herbalist who knows the medicinal uses of healing herbs has the best opportunity to possess the occult knowledge conferred by hallucinogenic shrubs and fungi. There are plants used to ease the pain of childbirth and myths of magic plants used for the same purpose. There is a Peruvian tale, very like the peyote myth cited above, telling how men first discovered the use of the cinchona bark from which quinine is made. If we begin our inquiry into the possible reality

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of the "magic" plants figuring in mythology with a compendium of real plants and their real uses in medicine, divination and religion, the list is immensely long and inevitably immensely tangled because medicine, divination and religion are tangled. Medicine enters this complex not because primitive medicine was limited to faith healing, but because the shrubs and herbs used in treatment were also used in religious ceremonies.

The most obvious thread for the ambitious theo-botanist to grasp would be the relation of drug plants and intoxicants to shamanism and its characteristic mythology of the disembodied soul. The greatest obstacle the student would encounter is a dearth of knowledge about the drugs used and their precise effects on the nervous system. We know enough about shaman mythology to make a beginning, and we have many eyewitness accounts of shaman performances; but all too often we are told simply that the shaman "takes something," without being told what he takes. This gap in the narrative can be explained in part by the shaman's reluctance to give away his secrets, and in part by the fact that early informants were inclined to regard the shaman's act as Satanism if they were Christians or sheer hocus-pocus if they were skeptics. The current anthropological tendency, so far as I can make out, is to study the shaman as a psychological or cultural phenomenon. Mircea Eliade in his book *Le Chamanisme* mentions the use of drug plants by many shamans, but seems to consider the drugs incidental to the tradition. The pattern, he implies, is already formed; the drug, when discovered, is adapted to the shaman's use. This assumption parallels that of the mythologists who put the desire for an afterlife and the belief in an imaginary nectar of immortality before the experience of actual plants and beverages used in the ceremonial communion with the gods or the ancestors. The food of occult knowledge, by the same token, is treated as fiction; and when the shaman drinks a mysterious beverage, it is assumed that he does so in pretence that it is the mythical draught. But isn't this putting Medea's chariot before her team of serpents?

When we consider the origin of the mythologies and cults related to drug plants, we should surely ask ourselves which, after all, was more likely to happen first: the spontaneously generated

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idea of an afterlife in which the disembodied soul, liberated from the restrictions of time and space, experiences eternal bliss, or the accidental discovery of hallucinogenic plants that give a sense of euphoria, dislocate the center of consciousness, and distort time and space, making them balloon outward in greatly expanded vistas? A belief in the soul's reincarnation would seem to me more plausible than the widespread idea of a soul's continued independent, disincarnate existence after it leaves the body, a concept usually explained by night-dreaming or an irrational fear of the dead. Perhaps the old theories are right, but we have to remember that the drug plants were there, waiting to give men a new idea based on a new experience. The experience might have had, I should think, an almost explosive effect on the largely dormant minds of men, causing them to think of things they had never thought of before. This, if you like, is direct revelation.

Trance, self-induced by whatever means, is an inseparable part of shamanism. During the trance the shaman's body is said to be emptied of his soul. There are two traditional interpretations of this phenomenon: one is the replacement of the shaman's soul by another spirit, that of a god, ancestor or deceased shaman. (The deceased shaman may of course be both god and ancestor, and any of the three may take animal form.) In the other interpretation, the one I am concerned with here, the liberated soul of the shaman goes on a journey, perhaps in search of a lost soul, perhaps as escort for the soul of one who has just died, conducting it to the land of the dead. The dislocated or liberated soul may fly across the pampa on a spirit-horse or ascend into the sky, to the moon or the North Star. R. G. Wasson, describing the effect of the divine mushroom taken in a séance at Huautla, says: "There is no better way to describe the sensation than to say that it was as though my very soul had been scooped out of my body and translated to a point floating in space, leaving behind the husk of clay, my body." This is the shaman's journey.

The effect of peyote or hallucinogenic mushrooms taken ceremonially to the accompaniment of drums, songs or the hypnotic chant of the shaman demanding the descent of the spirit is naturally somewhat different from that produced in a laboratory or

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office while a doctor sits beside his subject with a notebook. Nevertheless, Aldous Huxley's testimony on the effect of mescaline, especially insofar as time is concerned, is eloquent: "I could, of course, have looked at my watch," he says, "but my watch, I knew, was in another universe. My actual experience had been, was still, of an indefinite duration or alternatively of a perpetual present made up of one continually changing apocalypse." The mushrooms of Huautla do not contain mescaline, but the effect, according to Mr. Wasson, is similar: "The mushrooms sharpen, if anything, the sense of memory, while they utterly destroy the sense of time. On the night that we have described we lived through eons. When it seemed to us that a sequence of visions had lasted for years, our watches would tell us that only seconds had passed." The Indians say of the mushrooms: *"Le llevan ahí donde Dios está"*—"They carry you there where God is."

When the soma is poured on straw, the souls of the ancestors gather in their thousands to drink it, because this is their food. When the kava is poured in libation or drunk by the priests, the souls of the dead are invoked, and the entry of the shaman into trance announces their arrival. Ceremonially speaking, these are foods of disembodied spirits, but the Chinese have, in the Taoist tradition, another variant of the food of immortality. Here the emphasis is not on shamanism or the consultation of oracles, but on mysticism combined with alchemy. The Taoists, in their search for an actual "food of immortality," experimented with drug plants and venoms. They knew the uses of laurel, Indian hemp and muscarine extracted from the glands of the poisonous toad. They knew the *ling-chih,* the "divine fungus" eaten by Taoist hermits and depicted by Taoist painters. In one of his poems, Li Po announces that he has swallowed the pellet of immortality "and before the lute's third playing"—that is, the third stanza of a song—"have achieved my element." Does anyone suppose that Li Po really believed that a pellet would make him immortal? Was his pellet simply imaginary? Or was he speaking of the euphoria conferred by one of the drug plants known to the Taoist priests? To me it seems clear that his pellet was as real as a pellet of peyote paste; it was to him a "food of life" in the same sense that our

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aqua vitae is a "water of life." I also suspect that at least half the other foods of life (apples, ambrosia, leaves, bark, roots and elixirs) had their beginnings in real plants. The "talking" grasses and trees that the shaman uses to bring on his trance are certainly real, and insofar as they are used by him for this purpose, they are foods of knowledge—that is, of occult knowledge. Looking at the matter coldly, unintoxicated and unentranced, I am willing to prophesy that fifty theo-botanists working for fifty years would make the current theories concerning the origins of much mythology and theology as out-of-date as pre-Copernican astronomy. I am the more willing to prophesy, since I am, alas, so unlikely to be proved wrong.

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The House

MARY OLIVER

Because we lived our several lives
Caught up within the spells of love,
Because we always had to run
Through the enormous yards of day
To do all that we hoped to do,
We did not hear, beneath our lives,
The old walls falling out of true,
Foundations shifting in the dark.
When seedlings blossomed in the eaves,
When branches scratched upon the door
And rain came splashing through the halls,
We made our minor, brief repairs,
And sang upon the crumbling stairs
And danced upon the sodden floors.
For years we lived at peace, until
The rooms themselves began to blend
With time, and empty one by one,
At which we knew, with muted hearts,
That nothing further could be done,
And so rose up, and went away,
Inheritors of breath and love,
Bound to that final black estate
No child can mend or trade away.

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Form in Flux: Western Art

LINCOLN ROTHSCHILD

THOSE WHO INSIST on the mystical impenetrability of meaning in the fine arts pretend great respect for the importance of the arts. It may be suspected that their first concern is to assert their own superrational rapport and superior sensitivity, but the result is that many practical, orderly-minded people are discouraged from participation in the arts, and their value as a means of cultural expression for a substantial audience is diminished.

That any standard of value in art is contradicted by examples that are meritorious according to some *other* standard can be momentarily confusing. The confusion need not be extended, however, to the point of intellectual nihilism that rejects any degree of objectivity in analyzing art. Opposite types of excellence may be readily accepted and order restored by recognizing a pertinent polarity of purpose. We like this now, they liked that then; both are good and the two goods are opposite pans of a balance that rise and fall according to a momentum whose source can be made relatively clear.

The form of a work of art is determined not by accident or personal whim, but in accord with the artist's expressive purpose, consciously or unconsciously based on the cultural needs of the society he serves. This expressive aspect of form in art is its "style." A building created to dedicate a particular place to holy worship may be either a Greek temple or a Gothic cathedral. The intention to mark a location for very important use is immediately evident to any beholder, but in addition he can read from the form or style of the architecture whether the structure served the clear, calm, anthropocentric concept of the universe that charac-

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terized Greek culture, or the more intensely mystical and uncertain sense of human struggle with the forces of nature that was felt in northern Europe.

Such stylistic differences are distinguishable not only between one locality and another, but also between different stages of most cultures, especially in the Western world. For many years there has been widespread agreement among art historians that stylistic evolution is in some way integrated with the development of human society. Critics and scholars of the past, however, have not been able to indicate comprehensive and generally acceptable principles to clarify this relationship, and a number of their mistaken approaches to the analysis of style still have a confusing currency in the academic and professional art worlds of today.

An example is what Geoffrey Scott called, in his *Architecture of Humanism,* the "biological fallacy," an assumption common among art critics of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries that each culture had periods of growth, maturity and decay similar in automatic sequence and respective importance to the phases of a living organism. This analogy with plants and animals has been used to support completely arbitrary judgments of value, tending to disparage both primitive and sophisticated expression. Biological growth, however, has several stages of maturity. The horticulturist values the blossom, but the orchardist is concerned with the fruit. Most athletes are past their prime at thirty, but mental ability and emotional depth continue to develop long after that time. Thus the earlier styles of Bach and Botticelli may have their adherents as loyal and justified as those who like the later Mozart and Titian or Debussy and Tiepolo.

The "ethical fallacy," also noted by Scott, tends to discredit works that are not completely honest about the structural means involved in creating a particular effect. Yet it is curious that critics subscribing to this doctrine may laud the miraculous mirage of the Gothic nave floating high on delicate ribs, made possible only by the contrivance of flying buttresses on the outside where they are not part of the spectacle. These same critics at another time may decry as decadent dishonesty the atectonic fluidity of Rococo design or the use of a chain embedded in the base of a Renais-

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sance dome to counteract outward thrust. Obviously this criterion has no place at all in judging the architecture of the steel-framed skyscraper; yet it was used by many critics as the basis for attacking the skyscraper as a monstrosity of design.

These and other irrelevancies in the analysis of style have affected the judgment of value in the arts, and many of the prejudices they established have outlived the theories on which they were based.

In considering the prime production of any period, we must realize that however its form may offend or deviate from our own taste, its character is due to positive aims and preferences on the part of its creators and sponsors. That is to say, no style may be explained entirely as a failure to achieve an objective postulated from our own criteria. African Negro art, for example, is not based on a primitive inability to comprehend natural anatomical structure, but on a cultural need to impose geometrical distortions. Byzantine style is not the result of disorganization and loss of discipline among craftsmen trying to continue production in Roman style. Baroque style was not a "decadent" attempt by weak and irresolute artists to maintain the "perfection" of classical imitation achieved in the Renaissance. The so-called deviations are due to positive, expressive inclinations of the artists reacting to definite forces in their cultural background.

Stylistic analysis must deal with inherent qualities of form. Terms like classic, baroque and gothic are basically historical, referring not to qualities of the form but merely to its source. Even the quasi-technical designation "impressionistic" had its origin in a type of work being done at a particular time and place, involving a characteristic brushstroke and an attitude toward light as color, either of which might be meant when the term is used to describe other styles. When a measured stasis of design that was not produced in Greece or Rome is called "classic," a confusing range of possible meanings is opened up unless the term has been limited by prior definition. Is the work an eclectic imitation; or does it express in its own terms a "classic" quality and, if so, how is the reader to know what this is, since classical civiliza-

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tion was in constant flux for over a thousand years? Of course, definitions in art criticism as throughout the social sciences cannot always be absolute and inclusive. Frequently they can indicate only the focal, emphatic aspect of a phenomenon that merges peripherally with geographic or historical neighbors. Raphael's style in the high Renaissance can be called linear and tactile, but not categorically; for although it is more so than the succeeding Baroque style, it is less so than the work of earlier fifteenth-century artists.

The late Heinrich Wölfflin provided an excellent means of describing the apparently unbridled variety of style in Western art. He established two groups of opposite characteristics and indicated a clear evolutionary course from one group to the other over which the history of art has already passed several times. One group constitutes in a work of art a generally analytical or tactile appearance that by careful analogy might be called "classic"; the other comprises a fusion of optic sensations of which Baroque art might be considered typical. The two groups or "polar categories" are here briefly* described:

Works of analytical or classic expression invariably describe forms in a linear or tactile fashion establishing precise, continuous outer contours. They construct spatial depth by a series of parallel planes, or, especially in early societies, ignore the possibility of environmental reference and preserve the plane of the decorated object or building undisturbed. The total reference of the composition is enclosed within a firm enframement. The structure of the forms and their compositional relations are clearly articulated. A fully developed independence of all major parts is preserved, conferring virtually uniform emphasis on each. Movement or circulation of attention is achieved by carefully spacing these commensurate parts to set up a clear, firm rhythm.

In sensational or baroque styles, each of the same aspects of form is treated in quite the opposite fashion. Forms are described optically, by means of light and shade. The illusion of space is constructed by recessional relation of objects in depth, or, when no

* They are described at length in Heinrich Wölfflin's *Principles of Art History* (New York: Dover, 1940), and the author's *Style in Art* (New York: Yoseloff, 1960).

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illusion of deep space is desired, the objects are turned or move at an angle to the basic relief or picture plane. Forms are composed in a pattern of radiation from a dominant focus, with implications of movement continuing beyond the limits of the composition, or of forms actually breaking through the frame. Structural logic and stability are neglected, intentionally obscured or actually inverted. Details are fused into inclusive shapes and patterns with drastic subordination of minor figures to the dominant focal emphasis. Movement in such composition flows incessantly from part to part whether or not any activity or gesture is required by the subject.

These terms indicate clearly observable aspects of form in no way obscured by a critic's subjective allusion to other styles, and they apply throughout the plastic arts including architecture. This broad applicability, incidentally, shows that motivations of style in art must arise in some area outside the technical requirements of the media, and that they do not depend on accidental invention by individual artists. The author of this broadly useful vocabulary failed, however, to discover any relation between the occurrence of the qualities he described with such admirable objectivity and the conditions of human life at the periods when they appeared.

In their early stages, successive Western societies have produced art that exhibits a marked clarity of structure and detail, with almost uniformly distributed emphasis throughout each composition, as summed up in the "classic" category. This exhaustive objectivity clearly corresponds to the practical, analytical approach to life that would be required of rising, creative leaders in solving the problems of a new order, and that personifies generally a creative or productive role in society.

As leadership in a particular society becomes solidified or entrenched, and the problems that brought about the new order are liquidated, the leaders tend gradually to turn from active, creative government to establishing or maintaining a dynastic rule, for which they demand sophisticated cultural forms aimed largely at expressing power and wealth on a more and more dazzlingly luxurious scale. As a background for their aristocratic elegance, art must evolve more sensational, dynamic, magnificent,

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illogical or capricious inventions, either to glorify authority or to gratify sophisticated taste and fill an almost endless leisure.

Geographical differences seem to characterize the styles of Western Europe for equally demonstrable reasons. Art of the Mediterranean basin tends toward classical, anthropocentric clarity, while that of the transalpine North is infused with the complex organic character of natural growth and the tensions of human insecurity in the face of a more difficult struggle with natural environment. It must be noted, of course, that these local stylistic tendencies merge with those of the evolutionary pattern. Thus fifteenth-century work throughout Western Europe presents structural simplification of form and composition, with clarified linear description of objects, sharp and insistent representations of detail, and uniform distribution of emphasis. But Northern art—of Flanders or Germany, as compared with that of Italy—sacrifices some of the clarity of this approach by multiplying detail until it suggests the complexity of natural profusion, by bringing out the dynamic as well as the descriptive force of linear contours, by greater exploitation of deep space, and so on.

As style develops in the North, the second or "baroque" group of polar characteristics is carried far beyond similar manifestations in the Mediterranean area. Certainly the complex potentialities of Gothic rib-vaulted architecture were developed to a far greater extent in northern France, Germany and England than in Provence or Italy where this type of construction actually originated. Again, later, the Flemish painter Peter Paul Rubens developed an expression of aristocratic baroque taste more elaborate than anything produced in Italy where he first studied it.

The complex dynamic character of Northern art can be traced back through the elaborately interlaced designs used in early medieval manuscript illumination to the contorted animals in the prehistoric art of invading nomadic hordes from the Eastern steppes. In the early mythology of the area, magic constantly affects the fate of heroes, as when Siegfried is led to Brünnhilde by the songs of forest birds that he can understand after eating the heart of the dragon Fafnir. Even the gods are belittled by insuperable natural forces, like those that baffled Thor in his trials of strength

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at the home of the giants. Climatic rigors of the North, and perhaps greater historical proximity than Mediterranean culture to the nomadic stage of society, seem to have retarded there the development of an anthropocentric concept of the universe. Instead, these conditions bring about a less orderly, more sensational and dynamic expression comprising the second group of stylistic tendencies described above.

For art of all but comparatively recent times, a simple sequential relation of the polar categories of style—tightness of drawing, rigidity of composition in early periods, "loosening up" to freer, more fluid, dynamic expression in later periods—with local North-South variations of tension and emphasis, seems adequate to clarify the phenomenon and its motivation. Yet art from as early as the seventeenth century raises some questions. How was it that a "tight" realism developed in Holland (Vermeer, Steen, de Hooch and others) from the same background that produced contemporaneously the fanciful virtuosity of Rubens in neighboring Flanders? In fact, were not a number of Flemish artists also producing realistic genre at this time? How did France in the eighteenth century produce simultaneously the rococo art of Boucher and Fragonard and the restrained reality of Chardin, the explicit moralization of Greuze's "village scenes" and David's neoclassic "republican virtues"?

The source of the apparent inconsistency is not hard to find. The two types of style do not categorically represent different periods or stages in social development, but rather different roles or types of personality that tend to develop sequentially. Constant tension between the aristocracy and the *bourgeoisie* affected European society from the formation of the communes (chartered towns) in the thirteenth century until the triumph of the French Revolution. The relative directness of one or the sophistication of the other seems to dominate the cultural scene at any given point, but it is easy to discover that both were always present regardless of their respective degrees of historical recognition.

The tendency of art history to ignore this stylistic counterpoint has confused the judgment of values in art by fostering the notion

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that genius occurs by spontaneous generation and is independent of any cumulative process. Since a David could follow a Boucher, and a Delacroix could follow a David (with a similar alternation continuing in the styles of Courbet, Monet, Cézanne, Matisse and so on) it seems that anything may happen any time in art. Consequently today attention is directed more toward art that asserts a capricious *discontinuity* with everything that has gone before, than to art that serves a recognizable purpose with clearly appropriate and only moderate evolutionary changes.

To clarify the analysis of latter-day culture, two new terms must be added to the vocabulary of critical analysis in the arts. The two types of art, described above by the classic and baroque or tactile and optic groups of polar characteristics, are expressive basically of attitudes toward life developed by the roles of *producer* and *consumer* in human society.

These terms, of course, cannot be applied with mutual exclusion because every practical person must consume food, clothing and shelter about which he cannot fail to develop preferences. Such preferences, however, are easily ignored by a "producer" when outweighed by other considerations like cost or availability, whereas they are a chief concern of the "consumer." People privileged to dispose of great wealth, so that most of their attention and ingenuity is exercised in compounding luxury and sophistication for their own pleasure and social distinction, may also be forced at times into practical calculation to maintain their position in a changing and competitive world.

A Lorenzo de'Medici, manipulating the quasi-democratic political situation in Florence, and promoting local industry with new forms of financing, is more a "producer" than is the national monarch of later centuries whose administration is conducted by a cabinet of political experts, although the refinement of Lorenzo's taste was much greater. Today the fashion-minded family of a commercial entrepreneur may be more concerned with the function of consuming than is a wealthy patrician who dedicates himself to a serious social cause or professional career, although their means and innate refinement may be much less.

The personality accustomed to the tasks of producing goods

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and services in the objective material world, or of solving the problems of social organization and progress, responds to a tactile, detailed and logically articulated work of art presenting a generalized interpretation of reality. Here he finds an objectivity consonant with his practical needs and experience. For the consumer, whose resources accrue independently of any commensurate accomplishment, the evanescent, ingratiating or dramatic qualities of optic presentation are most gratifying because they embody the specific and sensational approach to reality that emphasizes the importance of the individual patron and fulfills his desire for entertainment.

Novelty, rich or subtle sensuous effects, virtuosity, emphatic climax and frenetic pace, however much they may be taken for granted currently as critical criteria, are not categorical indices of superiority in art, but primarily of the taste of the consumer. For others, equal and opposite values exist that are currently recessive in the plastic arts. "Well-building hath three ends, firmness, commodity and delight," wrote an early English architect. Whatever the medium, this might be the order of concerns for a producer.

Not only is prejudice against either kind of art shown to be unwarranted by this means of analysis and evaluation, but study of the gradations between the poles of functional dryness and capricious delight reveals the true nature of a "golden age." Perhaps here are some directives in the quest for a greater incidence of the excellence and vitality glimpsed in the Periclean and high Renaissance periods.

The course of every vessel is unique, but the points of the compass by which it is related to its objective are constant. A truly objective basis for analyzing form in the arts and the dynamics of its relation to human life would assist in the evaluation of new modes of artistic creation by deriving from past experience certain broad directional principles that would show their expressive trend. Conversely, the art of the past would become a legible documentation of the feelings and philosophical attitudes that man has experienced in arriving at the views he holds today.

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Obit

GILBERT HIGHET

What shall we say about him in the papers?
Stepped out into the path of a speeding car
No. Not such a stupid end for a man of mind.
In Claremont Hospital after a long illness
Among his scholarly works the most important
He had continued yes yes yes no. No.
Suddenly, by a stroke, after a class
No. Not that either, although possible.
Yesterday on the third floor of the library
Among the immortals speaking silent Greek
That would be peaceful, yet perhaps too pat.
But no, the air is wrong, the place is wrong:
Where are the heights, the trees, the wind, the birds?
Write in the notice: on the slopes of—what?
Some insignificant hill, it doesn't matter,
But climbing, with the wind around him and
The sky above and his remembering head
Quite full of poetry and music, climbing
Together with his one true friend and love
Up through the stalwart trees to timberline—
After a life of effort, rest and sleep.

✪ GILBERT HIGHET has been teaching Greek and Latin at Columbia University since 1937. He has published many verse translations from the Greek and Roman poets, and "when young," he says, "I wrote a good deal of original poetry."

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Child at Night

JOAN MEYERS

A kiss ere you go
On that perilous voyage
Through the darkened hours
Will not suffice:
There must be
Ceremony sufficient
To place a charmed
Medallion on your breast.
Dearest, rocked in my arms
And quieted from the day,
I lay you down, and you must sail alone
Down the dark river.
As the night hours fall
Over your face all shut away,
I kiss your small forehead,
Half hoping you will wake.

✪ JOAN MEYERS is presently an editor at Basic Books and managing editor of The Readers' Subscription book club, where she has written for the *Griffin*. Her previous experience includes a brief sojourn at *Partisan Review* as managing editor.

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A Look Around . . . . . .

Weights and Measures

PAUL A. ZAHL

Splintering southward in an irregular course from Jordan, under the Red Sea, through Ethiopia, Uganda, Kenya, Tanganyika, all the way to Mozambique and the Rhodesias, a distance of some four thousand miles, is the Great Rift Valley, this planet's most impressive series of crust fractures and displacements. In the detail-blurred geological past, some sections sank to form troughs and basins, others vaulted. One 30-by-60-mile block nearly straddling the equator soared to produce a secluded cluster of ice-festooned peaks.

Remote and inaccessible from the centers of early civilization, these mountains were nevertheless hinted at in ancient records. In *The Suppliant Women,* Aeschylus wrote of "God's great garden" (the Nile Delta) as "fed by distant snow"; in *Meteorologica,* Aristotle mentioned a "silver mountain" far inland whose fountains were subsequently thought to nourish the Nile. And the second-century A. D. geographer Ptolemy labelled certain markings on his crude map of Africa as *Lunae Montes*—an exotic designation which, quite inexplicably, was to become firmly attached to this most spectacular of Africa's ranges.

The source of such classical allusions may have been Arab traders who from earliest times had journeyed deep into the upper Nile, where they no doubt heard rumors of a gleaming white "mirage" far to the west. But the truth is that no man from the civilized world and few aboriginals had ever laid eyes on these mysterious mountains, for they were unpeopled, even as they are today, and perennially hidden in dense clouds whose liftings were as rare as they were brief. Their very existence was unverified until 1888 when Henry Morton Stanley on one of his highly publicized safaris passed west of Lake Victoria. Perfect timing seemed often to characterize Stanley's exploits, and he just happened to be within clear sighting distance of the great range at a moment when its normally static cloud cover chose to dissolve.

"Peak after peak," wrote the man who also found Livingstone and Emin Pasha, "struggled from behind night-black clouds . . . until at last the snowy range, immense and beautiful . . . drew all eyes and riveted attention, while every face seemed awed." Stanley promptly applied to his discovery the native term *Ruwenzori* (whence-the-rains-come), which today is used interchangeably with the more fanciful Ptolemaic label.

Stanley's guides insisted that the whiteness of the peaks was salt, but the party never tested this claim. It remained for an Italian duke, Luigi Amedeo di Savoia, once and for all to sift fact from fiction. In 1906, with an elaborate technical staff supported by a carrier troop of some two hundred natives, Amedeo mounted the first full-scale assault on the Mountains of the Moon. Reporting to the Royal Geographical Society in 1907, he told of ice fields, swirling snow, a barely endurable climate, brooding lakes, crags that towered almost seventeen thousand feet. But the words ". . . too weird . . . too improbable, too unlike all familiar images" Amedeo reserved for the vegetation of the mountains' higher altitudes—a unique flora which, along with its associated fauna, was to draw me to the Ruwenzori

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some fifty years later as a member of an IGY (International Geophysical Year) research group.

Today the ascent may be made either from the Uganda or the Congo side; and no longer is it a trailblazing feat, although the going is so rugged that pack animals cannot be used. Through forests of feathery bamboo and moss-draped tree heather, up nearly vertical embankments, over knife-edged ravines and quagmiry valley floors, across cascades of glacier-melt—it takes four full days to reach the heights and, unless one is unusually blessed, rain, sleet and biting wind contest every step of the way.

My first general view from our base camp at thirteen thousand feet took in Mounts Stanley, Speke and Baker, the range's three colossi, which leaned in precariously. Their highest pinnacles were mist-covered, as I had come to expect they always would be. On Mount Stanley's north shoulder, just below the cloud ceiling, hung an enormous ice cornice threatening at any moment to add tonnage to the white heaps in the valley below. A thread of water tumbling and zigzagging a thousand or more feet down Mount Speke's nearly vertical south wall implied another glacier somewhere up there in the clouds. Sculptured rock scarps on less lofty Mount Baker to the southeast stood profiled against the sullen overcast.

What endowed this Ruwenzori world, however, with its extraordinary aspect was not altitude, ice and snow, or structural immensity (all surpassed in the Alps, Andes and Himalayas), but rather, as Amedeo had observed, the outlandish character of its vegetation. Pressing in on our campsite were lobelias and groundsels as tall as telephone poles. Throughout the world's temperate and tropical zones, some three hundred and fifty species of lobelia and more than two thousand groundsels thrive mainly as shrubs and bushes; only in the mountains of East Africa do they exhibit what may be termed gigantism.

I stood at the base of a single lobelia whose roots twisted down into a rocky moraine matted with moss and liverwort. Its trunk, thick as a Yule log and shaggy with dead leaves, reached at least a yard above my head, then swelled into a great green pompon from whose leafy center grew a vertical taper nearly the length of a jousting lance. This shaft, the plant's floral bract, was covered with a velvety pile of mauve pink petals, sepals and stamens. A neighboring groundsel was bulkier and structurally more complex. Its trunk, perhaps eighteen feet tall and untidy with wilted leaves, branched like a candelabrum into three or four arms, each terminating in a burst of fresh leaves from which rose a switch of yellow blooms resembling small sunflowers. Thousands of similarly spiked lobelias and queerly plumed groundsels ranged up and down the slopes and marched across the valley floor until lost in the mists.

Less than a dozen steps from where I stood flowed a rivulet embedded deeply in the general moss mattress. At one place where its waters gurgled briefly into the open, I stooped and cupped a few handfuls onto my face. My skin was more numbed than cleansed, and I realized that this liquid only minutes before had been the stuff of glaciers. Coated with hoarfrost at this early morning hour, the lobelias and groundsels stood fresh and hale. They showed little sign of scourgings inflicted periodically by hail and sleet and almost continually by ice-chilled winds.

So harsh an environment seems if anything to have gladdened these bizarre plans and, indeed, to be related to their singular hypertrophic tendency, although there are glaciered peaks and mist-drenched valleys elsewhere in the world. Seeds transported to gentler lands germinate but fail to burgeon, which may not be surprising in view of one botanist's estimate that some of these high-altitude forms grow at the astonishingly slow rate of three feet every hundred years. If this is correct, a groundsel twenty-one feet tall would be seven hundred years old.

In addition to perennial wet and cold, influences on size and longevity may well include reduced atmospheric pressure, intense ultraviolet, a substrate abnormally rich in chemical growth stimulants and, of course, genetic and mutational factors. But

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no one knows which, if any, of these touch off or sustain the exuberance of Ruwenzori lobelias and groundsels, or to what degree. Neither, for that matter, is it known why Sequoias attain the tremendous bulk and height of a General Sherman or a General Grant only in California; or why bamboo shafts grow thick as nail kegs only in Burma; or why only in India the fig tree spreads to shade an entire village. Conversely, one might wonder why the Ruwenzori aspirants stop at a mere twenty or twenty-five feet. Why haven't they pushed on for fifty feet, or five hundred?

A takeoff point for further thoughts along this line was provided a day or two later. The expedition's carriers, fifty-two in number, had been recruited from a lowland tribe known as the Bakonjo. Having delivered gear and provisions to our base camp, half were dismissed to return to their villages, which they did in anxious haste. The ever present mist that deadens sound and blocks visibility is scarcely heartening; moreover, the knowledge was common that during an expedition six months earlier a man had died here of so-called Ruwenzori pneumonia. The remaining porters were bivouacked within walking distance of our base, under a beetling rock ledge north of Bujuku Lake. A sweater and blanket, together with rations of millet flour, groundnuts, salt, sugar and matches had been issued to each man, a practice begun half a century earlier by Luigi Amedeo and honored to this day by all expeditioners entering the Ruwenzori from the east.

I paid a visit to the carriers' camp. There around an open fire under the gneiss overhang, in an atmosphere so smoke-blue that I immediately began to cough, huddled the sweatered porters. Something was boiling in a pot suspended close over the fire—a rock rabbit, I was told, snared in the adjacent groundsel forest. Even had I spoken the cook's language well enough, I should have hesitated to explain that his stew meat was not a rabbit at all, but a creature that despite its diminutive size and rodent appearance was more closely related to the elephant and the mastodon than to the cottontail. Each of its toes had a hoof instead of a claw, and its dental anatomy was suggestively like that of an early pachyderm. At dusk I had often heard the cries of the hyrax (order Hyracoidea, family Procaviidae) from across the valley—a series of shrill, precisely spaced whistles.

But rabbit-size did not always characterize this group. Certain now extinct African hyraxes were once nearly as large as horses, thus beginning to approach the size category of their elephantine collaterals. Here again, one might wonder what prevented those outsized hyraxes, along with dinosaurs, whales and other of the earth's past or present giants, from becoming supergiants; or why, in the case of man, vertical growth is halted at a mere six feet. Conditioned by a professional background emphasizing the zoological, I found it natural to view this matter mainly in animal terms, which does not seem too unreasonable inasmuch as the growth and the evolutionary development of all protoplasm, plant or animal, have a common biochemical basis.

Consider the primitive microbe, suspended in a watery environment, feeding on dissolved nutrient by simple absorption —a process feasible only so long as the dimensions of the feeder stay within certain mathematically defined limits, for there is a calculable maximum beyond which a sphere of protoplasm cannot be nourished via absorption through its membrane. Thus when the urge to expand began to tempt some of the planet's earliest forms, volumetric swelling lost sway in favor of cell coherence. The resulting multicellular organism, with a great many cell surfaces now facing inward away from the food source, required new and more complex quartermastering, which eventually, among animals, led to the application of the tube-within-a-tube principle. The outer casing became what we call the body; the inner tube, a tract through which ingested food passed, yielding up its load of nutrient along the way.

During millennia of mutation and selective survival, as some of the creatures thus equipped with straight digestive tubes grew larger and required more and more energy to sustain their increased bulk, their

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intestinal tracts lengthened, becoming coiled and creased so that nourishment could be absorbed more effectively; in step-by-step progression, delivery pumps and pipelines developed so that every tissue and cell of the expanding body might be served. Hereby established was a trend to greater size and greater complexity which, at least for a time, must have worked to the survival advantage of those it affected.

Two factors seem finally to have discouraged size pretension. The first, obviously, was the absence of unlimited food in a competitive milieu; the second, and by far the more telling, was the laws of hydrostatics, gas exchange, mechanics, surface tension, gravity, *et cetera*. For example, a toothpick is relatively inflexible, but a ten-foot length of wood as thin as a toothpick will bend and break of its own weight if lifted from the middle. Such long-backboned Mesozoic reptiles as the fifty-ton *Brachiosaurus* and the eighty-seven-foot *Diplodocus* had to buoy their tonnage in grassy bogs and lakes, needing meanwhile to feed almost continuously. Snakes long ago gave up trying to lift a long backbone; and whales, like other aquatic gargantuas before them, have always had to depend on water for buoyancy. The elephant, giraffe and some of the extinct reptiles appear to have approximated the maximum allowable mass and height for free-ranging terrestrial animals.

As to man, the sixty-foot Brobdingnagian of Swift's fancy would have tipped the scales at some ninety tons, a weight in no way supportable by humanly proportioned bones, even if fashioned of iron and powered by muscles and tendons of steel strength. With his first step, such a "man" would crash to earth of his own weight. For him to stand erect and walk, his construction would have to resemble that of a microcephalic creature afflicted monstrously with elephantiasis —tiny head, short neck, narrow shoulders, enormously broad and massive pelvis, mountainous legs and feet. At best, this living pyramid could move only at a lumbering gait. The mouth, even with continuous feeding, could not possibly devour enough to keep the system going. And need we mention the difficulties in store for such a creature in matters of respiration, homeostasis, circulation, reproduction, excretion?

Among the airborne, certain principles of aerodynamics (not to elaborate on the profound engineering problems involved in the flapping of great wings) have restrained any and all adventures into gianthood. Swans, storks and flamingos appear to be at the upper limit of the avian size scale. Larger birds have inevitably been grounded, as for example, the emus, ostriches and the extinct moas of New Zealand.

Within the plant kingdom, a few hundred tons of mass and a few hundred feet of height appear to be culminal. Horizontal forms such as the mangrove may have total bulk exceeding this somewhat, and certain creepers extend over considerable areas; but here, as in the case of other plants, the injunction of logistics operating under the rules of elementary physics and chemistry pretty well obviates the possibility of sky-reaching beanstalks.

Ruwenzori lobelias and groundsels are, to be sure, mighty within their own genera, but they obviously fall far short of the upper size potential for botanic forms, as realized, say, by a General Grant. They may still be en route. In any case, it does not seem unduly bold to suggest that no matter how powerfully prodded any species, plant or animal, may be by forces of genetics and environment, or how well or continuously supplied with nutritive energy, its size-apogee is preordained and will remain so even though biological evolution should continue for another billion years. Under the house rules of our planet, the behemoths of science fiction can exist only in that realm.

For two weeks my colleagues (a geologist, a glaciologist, a geophysicist, a meteorologist and an electronics specialist) made repeated sorties up the peaks, securing data on glacier flow, ice thickness and stratification, melt rate, precipitation, while I more or less independently pursued my interests in the biological sphere. As we began to pack up, I harbored a mild sense of disappointment, for during this otherwise absorbing encampment the blanket on the pinnacles had not once lifted.

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But the luck of a Henry Morton Stanley was with me, for toward midmorning of departure day, just as we were passing out of the Bujuku valley, the cloud cover suddenly dissolved, and there stabbing up magnificently into the blue were the Ruwenzori's two highest spires, ice-clad Margherita (16,753 feet) and Alexandra (16,749). Within minutes, and with almost savage fierceness, the weather up there swirled in, and again the heights were totally eclipsed.

My final encounter with Ruwenzori giants occurred next day about halfway down. Sloshing along through a particularly heavy downpour, we came upon an earthworm thick as a garden hose and a good three feet long, squirming in the trailside mire. I was ready to claim him as further evidence of gigantism in the Mountains of the Moon, but subsequent perusal of the literature indicated, alas, that unusually large lumbricoids are found not only here but in other parts of Africa, and in India and Australia as well.

AN UNPROFESSIONAL EYE

Benjamin DeMott has been awarded a Guggenheim fellowship for a study of American attitudes toward work and leisure. During the coming year his studies will take him to all sections of the United States. His column, AN UNPROFESSIONAL EYE, *will be resumed in the Autumn 1964 issue.*

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CONtroversy

About the Dictionary

Comments by Philip B. Gove, Harold B. Stein, Robert N. Hertz, Sue Kimmell and William Hamrick on Jacques Barzun's article, "What Is A Dictionary?" in the Spring SCHOLAR.

The function of a dictionary is to help the person who consults it. A thousand people who consult it could have a thousand different reasons. Predictably, some will be helped and some will not be. The consulter of a dictionary should not open it to find out who won the Ivy League football championship two years ago or how to make New England rum. He would not find out how many pheasants a licensed hunter can shoot in South Dakota in one season or what towns in Kansas have local option. He would not discover how many sonnets Wordsworth wrote or how many Terry clocks are still ticking. If he were to look expectantly for such information, he would at best merely be revealing his utter unfamiliarity with dictionaries; more seriously he could be disqualifying himself for a scholarship.

If, however, a consulter wants to know what use Eleazar Wheelock might have had for a *Gradus ad Parnassum,* he might find the answer in a dictionary. He might be able to find the population of South Dakota and the area of Kansas. Even these questions, however, lie in a special area not strictly lexical. If a dictionary expressly restricts itself to the generic vocabulary, a consulter who looks in it for nongeneric information is asking it to perform a service for which it was not built. I am restricting my statement about the function of a dictionary to our generic English vocabulary.

An ideal dictionary would seem to me to be one in which a genuine consulter can find right off a satisfactory answer to a proper question. The matter of a proper question should concern spelling, pronunciation, etymology, meaning, function, or status, for these are the six kinds of information generally given explicitly or implicitly for each word. By far the most important of these is meaning, which for most words is the chief concern of a lexicographer. Status is of three kinds: (1) temporal (if a word is obsolete or archaic, it is so labeled; otherwise it is current); (2) regional (if a word is found in only one region of the English-speaking world, it is so labeled; otherwise it is general); and (3) stylistic (if a word is in some degree clearly not standard, this may be indicated by a label or note).

A genuine consulter is one who needs to know something about a word he has heard or read or who wants to know how to use a word in speaking or writing. Since readers in our civilization outnumber writers several thousand to one, the most important function of a dictionary is to help a reader to find out what a word means so that a passage read can be understood, so that what its author intended can be figured out. A consulter of a dictionary who does not have a context into which to fit a word he looks up is not a genuine consulter. He may be motivated by a desire to criticize or to find out how a word is treated, or by several other secondary or tertiary interests. He is not looking in a dictionary for a key to open a door to understanding. His findings, although sometimes made articulate, if not vociferous, are relatively trivial.

If a consulter is a writer, his dictionary

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should let him know what meaning his readers are likely to put on a particular word in a particular context. A dictionary does not undertake to tell him what someone thinks his readers ought to understand. There is no point in telling anybody that the word *arrival* ought to be reserved for a "coming to shore by water" if no one understands or uses it that way. A dictionary is not concerned with telling a writer how he should write. That is a writer's business, in which he serves as his own arbiter.

The difficulties of using a dictionary are often attributed to the dictionary maker, as if he were responsible for all the complications in the language. Our language is infinitely complex and difficult. No one person can ever master it. There is no formula for making it easy and simple and no panacea for those who stumble around in it in a daze. The reducing of this complexity to some kind of ordered presentation which can most of the time give a consulter the guidance he seeks is one of the lexicographer's chief accomplishments. When a dictionary fails a consulter, it is often either the consulter or the language which is responsible.

For whom is an unabridged dictionary made? Not for foreigners and not for children. The definitions in it are not written under an assumption that the consulter may be totally unacquainted with the company a word keeps. Outside of contests and quizzes (or bets) words do not exist by themselves; they are surrounded by other words and live in a context of associated and related ideas, from which a consulter takes to the dictionary some little bit of understanding. The definition he finds helps him to fit a word into a frame. If it fails to help him, because the subject is difficult or unfamiliar, he may give up, for lack of ability or background. Not all words are for everybody. Definitions in an unabridged dictionary are written for adults of all kinds and degrees of interest and intelligence. Yet every user of the language is continually getting into semantic problems over his depth.

For the majority of situations in which a dictionary is consulted for meaning, words may be roughly divided into three groups: (1) Hard words which circumstances make immediately important: "The doctor prescribed synthesized *cortisone*." "*Recidivism* is a serious criminal problem in some urban communities." "*Existentialism* is a subjective philosophy." (2) Words frequently seen, usually understood loosely, but suddenly or recurrently unstable (for the individual): *synthesize, urban* and *subjective* in the preceding sentences. (3) Common familiar words which unexpectedly need to be differentiated (*break* vs. *tear, shrub* vs. *bush*) or specifically clarified, such as *fable, adventure, shake, door, remainder, evil.* Most people get by without having to clarify these common words in the third group until they become an issue. Without an issue definitions of these common words are frequently jumped on because the word looks easy to the uninitiated, although in practice they are usually more difficult than hard words to define.

A lexicographer understands that a dictionary can be misused and misinterpreted, but he keeps his mind on its proper use, on words rather than on people, and tries with all his diligence and percipience to tell the truth about their behavior. The only area in which the truth may be found is actual usage. In fine, the function of a dictionary is to reflect the facts of usage as they exist. A dictionary neither permits nor prevents. If a consulter goes to it to find out whether he can or cannot say or write anything different from what he finds there, his self-subjection is a preconceived notion and the consequences are his personal responsibility.

PHILIP B. GOVE*
Editor in Chief, Webster's Third New International Dictionary

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In his article on the dictionary, Jacques Barzun reveals not only his impeccable English usage and his brilliant style, but his vast experience in the realms of gold. Un-

* Mr. Gove writes that his comment is taken by permission from a piece originally written for the *Dartmouth Alumni Magazine* and used in a panel discussion at a joint convention of the Conference on College Composition and Communication and the California Association of Teachers of English in Los Angeles in March.

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fortunately, he reveals also that "the scholar cornered" is human enough to lay aside at times fairness and objectivity.

Particularly unfortunate is Mr. Barzun's choice of his first example of the supposedly subversive "dogma" pervading *Webster's Third New International Dictionary:* ". . . the populism and scientism of the new lexicon appear together, for example, in the twenty-first use of 'of,' as an alteration of 'have'—'I should of come.' This is given as representing, 'especially in written dialogue, a supposed dialectal or substandard speech.' The word 'supposed' is laden with prejudice, and one is amazed at the suggestion that this 'of' occurs in writing only."

Is it Mr. Barzun's contention that "have" in "I should have come" is pronounced like "have" in "I have no book"? How many persons, educated or not, habitually use an aspirated "h" in "I should have come"—*in conversation?* Surely most of us employ a pronunciation very similar phonetically to, if not identical with, that of "of."

The entry in question, then, means that an author who in writing dialogue uses the spelling "of" instead of "have" to indicate that the speaker does not employ standard usage is being unrealistic. The word "supposed," which shocks Mr. Barzun, implies that this pronunciation in certain contexts is not incorrect, as in fact it is not. And, far from implying that the substitution of "of" for "have" occurs in writing only, the entry means that this substitution occurs commonly in speech, but that it is usually in writing that such a pronunciation is, by implication, ridiculed.

It is surprising and saddening to find a scholar of the stature of Jacques Barzun willing to accept without question all the misstatements, misinterpretations and untruths promulgated by the opponents of linguistics. I shall deal briefly with three basic misconceptions:

(1) The linguist does not believe in standards of usage. To him one locution is as good as another, and in fact the usage of the majority is, on democratic principles, the best. This canard has been so frequently denied that it should be unnecessary to discuss it. All of the linguists whom I know, and all but one of those whom I have read, insist on the importance of usage standards and are vehement in their insistence that it is the duty of the schools to teach standard English.

Linguists do study "incorrect" English. Likewise, psychiatrists study insanity and penologists study crime. Obviously, such study does not imply approval of or preference for the phenomena being studied. Mr. Barzun's statement that ". . . whatever 'the people' utter is a 'linguistic fact' to be recorded, cherished, preferred to any other reason or tradition" is not only a *non sequitur* but an absurdity.

I concur with the statement of a noted linguist who wrote that he would be happy to accept Jacques Barzun's written usage as a norm. Mr. Barzun's usage is, I repeat, impeccable. Yet some traditionalists would object to certain locutions in Mr. Barzun's article. These include the use of "which" without specific reference, three incomplete sentences, a number of sentences beginning with "and" or "but," and several instances of the terminal preposition. All of these represent good usage in the contexts in which they appear, but all of them violate traditional "rules" that are still enforced in the English departments of many high schools. It is such hyper-urbanisms and false notions about usage that linguists attack. (Obviously, such misconceptions were spawned by traditional grammar, not by structural linguistics.)

(2) Linguists are not interested in writing, and in fact scorn it. This is completely untrue. Not only have many linguists written college textbooks analyzing literary style (one of the best is *A New Handbook for Writers* by Sumner Ives), but the writings of great English and American authors have provided a corpus for linguistic studies, especially on the levels of morphophonemics, syntax and semology. (Among the bewildering inconsistencies in Mr. Barzun's article is that, after soundly berating the linguists for their interest in speech, Mr. Barzun lists first among the forces leading to the decay of language "The triumph of the written word at the expense of oral traditions.")

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(3) The linguist is not "sensitive to the varieties of linguistic experience." This amazing implication is refuted by the writings of Sapir and Whorf, their hypothesis that language structure shapes our apprehension of reality, the Linguistic Atlas with its insights into regional dialects, applications of linguistics to psychiatry by Trager, Smith, and Birdwhistell, Edward Hall's studies of the effects of language on intercultural understanding, the work of Henry Lee Smith, Jr., in semology and stylistic congruence, the very titles of such books as Lloyd and Warfel's *American English in Its Cultural Setting*—the list could be extended for pages. Mr. Barzun's observations on semantics and on the relation of language to culture are in fact basic postulates of linguistics. In one especially cogent sentence Mr. Barzun expresses a fundamental thesis of linguists: "Language indeed comes closest to being the envelope of life; it is the web, certainly, of conscious life."

I fully share Mr. Barzun's gratification that "some people at least still feel strongly about language and can be roused to battle about it." I share, too, what I am sure is the feeling of most of your readers in rejoicing that so fine a mind as that of Jacques Barzun is deeply concerned about language. One cannot help wishing, however, that Mr. Barzun would in some way ascertain what structural linguists actually believe. If he should do this, he would both describe and assess their views more accurately.

HAROLD B. STEIN
Williamsville Central Schools
Williamsville, New York

After perspicuous plucking of a colloquialism, a preposition, and a definition or two, Professor Barzun arrives—with acknowledged mirth over every page of his research—at a definition of his own. A dictionary, it seems, is to be regarded as nothing less ominous than a prophetic document augurring the decline of civilization. This is indeed an insight into the philosophical aspects of lexicography that would never have been revealed to me, even if I had occasion to look up the words "of" or "ain't." I am reminded of those readers who quickly pursue each new dictionary to determine the comprehensiveness of its list of obscenities. Appalled at the omission of several indispensable ones, they berate the editors for prudishness, incompetence and ignorance. Obviously, a polite definition of such words is as necessary as it is enlightening. Their inclusion, on the other hand, would surely provide irrefutable evidence for some readers that civilization has very nearly hit bottom.

Although my own use of the dictionary is considerably more mundane than that of Professor Barzun, permit me to suggest that most people, however "cultivated," generally consult one because they have forgotten for the fiftieth time how many "l's" there are in "appellation" or to discover whether "i" comes before "e" in "leisure." Surely no dictionary, at any rate, will in the least corrupt those who try to be discriminating: if anything, its thoroughness will help them to discriminate more wisely. Needless to say, it will not even be consulted by those who habitually converse in language that Professor Barzun hesitates to acknowledge as existing.

If a compendium of words in English hints darkly of gloom, then let us by all means place it with other such subtle auguries of disaster as radioactivity and the Chairman of the Chinese Democratic Republic. Why hide the naked truth by excluding or damning every conceivable—and revealing—impropriety of grammar and usage? Give us the facts so that we can make our own judgments—or judgements: one would not want to go to England and forget to bring along the "e."

ROBERT N. HERTZ
Cornell University

Mr. Barzun's article was such a delight that I am constrained to thank him for it.

It was refreshing to read so forthright an opinion expressed fairly and without venom. I say "amen" to his every statement.

When Bergen Evans had his panel show on TV I used to be annoyed at his disregard of proper English usage, and his willingness

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to compromise in favor of "popular" misusage. No one wants to be considered pedantic, but it seems to me that it is important to preserve the best in our language. I often wonder what is happening to children's concept of syntax and pronunciation as they listen to the dreadful carelessness on radio and TV: "stummick," "like he did," " 'Who Do You Trust?' " What can be done to counteract this trend? Mr. Barzun has made a valuable contribution. I hope that other authoritative voices will be heard.

SUE KIMMELL
Hollywood, California

At the climax of Mr. Barzun's essay, he lists specific pairs of words, accusing the dictionary by implication of "applauding" the fact that distinctions between them are becoming blurred. Unfortunately, he did not trouble to read the entries he was complaining about. The one under "infer" does give two meanings which show the supposed blurring of the "infer-imply" distinction, one used by Shakespeare and the other by the Manchester *Guardian* (both of which, by the way, are written sources), but it by no means suggests that "infer" can be used freely for "imply." Under "imply" there are no cross-references to "infer" nor can one reach "infer" through the string of synonyms offered for either "imply" or its two cross-referenced synonyms, "include" and "suggest." Nor does the entry under "infer" either give "imply" as a synonym or cross-reference any other word that does. Now, I admit that it requires careful reading and a couple of minor inferences to come to the realization that the dictionary does not applaud the blurring of the distinction between these two words, but it should not have been beyond the capabilities of the co-author of *The Modern Researcher.*

Five of the nine blurrings Mr. Barzun cites are indeed supported by the dictionary, though. "Connive" and "cohort" are cited as synonyms for "conspire" and "companion" respectively, but "connive" does not appear in any form under "conspire" and "cohort" does not appear under "companion." If this is applause, it is audible only to the man who can see the seven Communists on the blank page of *The John Birch Coloring Book.* It is not the function of a dictionary to applaud or decry, anyway; it merely records what the owners of a language do with their property. And the owners of English are not the linguists nor the Merriam Company, nor those eminent philosophers Follett and MacDonald—and they are certainly not Mr. Barzun and his twelve apostles. The owners of English are the people, all the people, who use it. The person who ignores this fact will inevitably build a wall of hypercorrectnesses and moribundities between himself and his audience.

The other three of the five "approved" blurrings, "precipitous" for "precipitate," "disinterested" for "uninterested," and "elemental" for "elementary," are blurred not only in the new Webster but in the *Oxford English Dictionary,* where we learn that each is historically attested in literary writing but now "rare" or "obsolete." Does this indicate that decay means on the one hand the disappearance of old distinctions and on the other the refusal to accept new ones? If so, the arrival or departure of distinctions is hardly an objective measure of "decay"—if such a thing exists—and we are left wondering just what Mr. Barzun meant by his defense of the written tradition.

Mr. Barzun confesses, "I did not read every page, but at least once in every page I read I laughed." If he had read the pages that contained the entries he was writing about, he might have learned, amid all the jollity, that one using the new Webster's could not possibly mistake "fortunate" for "fortuitous," "fulsome" for "complete," or "difference" for "differential." The entries make it so abundantly clear which word is which that even a grammatical dilettante could understand. And Mr. Barzun's vulgarism "no one would feel the differential" is totally without support from the Third.

WILLIAM HAMRICK
Brown University

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CONtroversy

On Graduate Literary Study

Comments by William C. DeVane, Fredson Bowers, Irving T. Richards, Howard O. Brogan, Lester A. Beaurline, Michael Bliss and Don Sharp on the article, "What's Wrong With Graduate Literary Study?" by Louis D. Rubin, Jr., in the Spring SCHOLAR.

I might put in a small complaint about the article on graduate education in the Spring issue. What graduate school did the author attend? From his account he certainly got a poor deal but what he says is not characteristic of first-rate graduate schools in English.

WILLIAM C. DEVANE
Yale University

This past year I had occasion to visit a number of undergraduate colleges. At one place during informal talks about graduate work I found two students who had given up the thought of college teaching after they had been frightened by accounts of the medieval rigors of graduate school and the necessary doctorate. The responsible agent was the college's disciplinary dean acting as student adviser who, perhaps to show how tough he was, regaled his innocents with grisly stories that might have applied to conditions in the English department of a grimly determined but third-rate university about fifty years ago.

Mr. Rubin has had no more personal experience with the problems of graduate instruction than this gentleman, and as a result his article is as retrospective, and as much dependent upon hearsay. To do him justice, however, he is only about twenty-five years behind the times, not fifty; but he still has not heard of the revolution in English-literature graduate studies that has occurred since the war whereby an emphasis on critical scholarship has come to balance the old-fashioned major concern with instruction and examination in basic historical scholarship of the kind that he deplores.

Unfortunately, as a consequence of his backward-looking, he may well succeed in discouraging various good students from a career in college teaching just as effectively as did the bumbling college dean whom I encountered. If one is to be a reformer of academic abuses, a certain obligation to be up-to-date ought to be imposed. Otherwise there is a phrase for one's efforts that is drawn from *Don Quixote*.

FREDSON BOWERS
University of Virginia

It may be that our graduate programs in literature require some revision, but Mr. Rubin's prospectus for revision hardly promises improvement. "I feel," he affirms, "that graduate study should . . . be designed to train young men and women to understand and appreciate literature . . . ," and that seems to be the gist of his thesis. His principal argument in support of it seems to be that not all who understand and appreciate literature are products of its graduate schools.

Doubtless all students of literature should strive to understand and appreciate it, and no one ever supposed that literature has been written exclusively for the study of graduate students. But, one might ask, how does a person become a graduate student of literature who has not already made considerable progress in understanding and ap-

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preciating it? If through his high-school and undergraduate college years he has not learned to enjoy the study of literature, is it likely that graduate study can teach this exceedingly late bloomer to understand and appreciate it? Of course Mr. Rubin is quite right in feeling that graduate study should not extinguish interest in literature, but promote it. It should certainly do more, however, than feed the fires of enthusiasm, and should not have to kindle them.

Although Mr. Rubin makes the early statement, ". . . I have no objection whatever to historical scholarship," he later states, "My quarrel is . . . with the *kind* of historically oriented training . . . designed, I think, for literary historians, for bibliographers, for historians of ideas." Such training, he says, has "for the would-be literary critic . . . relatively little to offer." He is skeptical whether "a poem's importance ever at any time lay in its contribution to the history of ideas." He finds of value in literature only "its imaginative ordering of experience, its insight into human conduct," and condemns as "nonliterary qualities" all "the social history of the times when the author lived, the history of the philosophical premises on which the author's values are based, the day-by-day events of the author's life, the books in the author's library, the evolution of the language in which the author wrote. . . ."

One can agree with Mr. Rubin that literature is always communication of individual author with individual reader, however numerous the readers may be. But literature is also the record of what has been thought, "imagined," and said in the world, not all of it the best, as Arnold habitually demonstrated in his criticism. And each author is, to a considerable degree, the product of his environment, participating in or observing the events occurring in his lifetime, sharing the ideas then prevalent and through his reading aware of the events and ideas of earlier periods. Nor has he necessarily put all of himself into his writings. The life he led is also part of his self-expression. If we would understand him, we must study him broadly and deeply. Even then we shall never understand him fully.

Nor is language separable from literature. German, Mr. Rubin says, "is no more relevant to the study of most present-day English literature than is French, Spanish, Latin, Greek, Sanscrit, or Choctaw." Except for the close relation of German to English, and inclusion of the last two languages listed, for which we might better substitute Italian and Russian, he is quite right: they are all important, although not all essential. Does Mr. Rubin mean "present-day study of English literature" or does he believe graduate schools should confine their attention to "present-day literature"? The only clues are statements that "One's appreciation of William Faulkner is in no vital way enhanced by a knowledge of medieval English," and that instead of in the study of German, a graduate student's time "could be far more profitably spent in reading the poems and stories that he came to graduate school to study."

No one can ever know literature thoroughly, and within its bounds would appear to be plenty for the graduate schools to do besides titillating the interest of their students in reading, or engaging in such projects as Mr. Rubin reports some of his acquaintances wasting their time on.

For evidence of the value of historical knowledge to the literary critic, I can do no better than refer to Mrs. Trilling's admirable study of Edith Wharton's *The House of Mirth* in the Winter issue of the SCHOLAR. Here is history, not remote, but within the memory, if not the experience, of some of us. Yet with the perspective that only a half century now casts upon the novel, Mrs. Trilling has probably interpreted it far more penetratingly and truly than did any of Mrs. Wharton's most avid contemporary readers. If after only a half century historical knowledge can so significantly interpret literature, how much more important is historical knowledge for interpretation of more remote works.

IRVING T. RICHARDS
Cambridge Junior College

Professor Rubin may well object to graduate studies in literature if they are trivial

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or pointlessly pedantic. I am dubious, however, that he can base his opinions on the disappointment of a young man on his first exposure to serious graduate study. He probably would find that neophyte students in medicine, law or science are also disappointed that their studies are pedestrian and tedious, not at all resembling the TV programs dealing with these studies.

Would he think it better to cut out all the wearisome anatomical studies for the prospective surgeon? the patient analysis of legal cases by the lawyer-to-be? the mastering by the young scientist of painstaking experimental method?

His plea is mainly for a reorientation of graduate study from a historical to a critical bias. This reorientation has already taken place in the better graduate schools, far more than he seems to be aware. Critical scholarship, however, can be just as tedious as historical. It requires patient analyses of meaning and language, a scrupulous attention to critical definition and a basic sensitivity to literary nuances. No doubt it is possible for third-rate practitioners to make this method of study just as dull and pedantic as historical scholarship has ever been. At its best it is a difficult skill. While Professor Rubin may prefer this kind of scholarly tedium to another, some students will be bound to find it boring too if it becomes a required procedure.

Scholarship in any area—if one takes it seriously—is hard work. Work is certainly a check upon the spontaneity of the student and a stain on the gloss of the academic career. I for one do not encourage bright young men to suppose that it will be easy to become a genuine scholar or entertaining to do a good job of teaching. It will be hard work, and those who do not want to work should choose some other walk of life.

HOWARD O. BROGAN
University of Massachusetts

For every one of the ten thousand ills said to beset our nation's colleges, there exists the jawbone of an ass working to slay them. I am sorry when I see this admirable strength pitted against an adversary dying since 1935. I don't know where Professor Rubin has been hiding, these last twenty-five years. What he describes as the "dryasdust" philological disciplines were dominant in the 1920's and 1930's—principally a tribute to the influence of men such as G. L. Kittredge. (Ironically, Mr. Rubin praises Kittredge as the great critic who never received a Ph.D. But anyone who wants to see Kittredge's fearful power to antagonize the critics should read Stuart P. Sherman's attack, recently reprinted in *Great Teachers,* edited by Houston Peterson.) But that was before the flood. A deluge of critical dissertations, a deluge of critical books, and a deluge of students interested in twentieth-century writers have engulfed our graduate schools.

The philological scholars got their first serious challenge when the University of Chicago announced a drastic revision of its English curriculum, shortly after R. S. Crane's article, "History versus Criticism in the University Study of Literature," appeared in the *English Journal,* October 1935 (college edition). Both Norman Foerster and John Crowe Ransom, at the time, praised the revolutionary changes at Chicago as a move in the right direction. In the late 1940's, graduate students were required to read René Wellek and Austin Warren's *Theory of Literature,* and in the 1950's Northrop Frye's *Anatomy of Criticism* took the graduate schools by storm, and Professor Frye became the most sought-after literary lecturer in North America.

The dissertations that are accepted in English have also changed character since Mr. Rubin went to school. He invites us to look at the list of titles that are accepted nowadays. It is even more revealing to read the dissertations themselves, or at least to read the summaries in *Dissertation Abstracts.* In the last nine issues covering May 1962 through January 1963, I found some surprising evidence. The most popular subject was William Faulkner. And I made a rough classification of the kinds of subjects that were acceptable for the same period. The breakdown is as follows: *philological* dissertations—biography 7, literary and social history 18, sources and conventions 15,

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religious or philosophical ideas 5, editing and textual studies 18, bibliography 2; *critical* dissertations—thematic study 49, techniques of style, characterization, plot 40, general critical estimates 32; *literary theory* 19; *creative writing* 1. Literary criticism wins by a score of 121 to 65. Even if we were to classify literary theory under philological writing, the score is still 121 to 84. The most popular period was the twentieth century, by far; of 196 titles on English and American literature, 60 of them were on twentieth-century writers. (The total number of subjects is more than 196, because some titles had to be counted as two different subjects.)

A glance at the course offerings in major graduate schools shows how widespread is the interest in literary criticism and in twentieth-century writers. Harvard, where we expect to find the lengthened shadow of Kittredge's factual study, in a recent catalog lists some exciting graduate courses: H. M. Jones teaching "Neglected Masterpieces," Harry Levin, "Thematics," and I. A. Richards, "Poetics: Interpretation and Meaning." The same sort of thing is true at Michigan, California, Yale and other schools. At Vanderbilt you find a typical small-school curriculum: 12 hours of creative writing, 36 hours of older literature, 15 hours of twentieth-century literature, 6 hours of literary theory, 3 hours of linguistics, and zero hours of bibliography.

Similar evidence of a revolution in literary study can be found in the learned journals, in the new role of the creative writer in the universities, and in the brilliant critical books being published by young professors. F. O. Matthiessen may have been very exciting in his day, but he is old-hat compared to Wayne Booth, Robert Ornstein and M. H. Abrams. Nowadays *PMLA* prints articles such as "Art Allegory in *The Marble Faun*," "Mark Twain's Use of the Comic Pose," and "Two Future Worlds of Aldous Huxley." (These were in the June issue of 1962.) The *ELH* now prints more critical than historical articles.

We still have many problems to solve: how should we bring modern literary criticism into a working relation with rhetoric, logic and grammar? how should we prepare graduate students to teach courses in composition? how do we relate historical study to critical judgment? But the old philological study is no longer a major problem—unless it is neglected too much in some schools. A young Ph.D. has real trouble these days teaching his first course in composition and rhetoric. He knows very little grammar, less logic and no rhetoric. But he feels much more adequate when he comes to literary interpretation of *Moby Dick* or *Lord of the Flies*.

Therefore, it looks as if Mr. Rubin is courageously charging through open gates. The editors of THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR did not recognize spurious courage when they saw it.

LESTER A. BEAURLINE
University of Virginia

Louis Rubin's title is compelling, because of course there is a great deal wrong with graduate literary study. His article, though, can only be called disappointing. To stand by helplessly while one's cause is taken up and brought to battle for all of the wrong reasons is a particularly acute form of intellectual torture. Mr. Rubin has successfully inflicted it upon me and, I am sure, a good many others who are concerned with graduate education.

"The system," Mr. Rubin writes, "is passive, dead, inert, and stifling." And it is the system, not the graduate teachers, for which he says he is gunning. Systems, however, are notoriously vague and are best brought to bay in the persons of hypothetical—and real—graduate professors. Thus Mr. Rubin's plot is thick with villains of a uniformly sinister cast, including the benighted Shakespearean scholar who does not think Empson sufficiently "scholarly." I do not doubt that there are such men in our universities—although they are certainly not the norm that Mr. Rubin implies—but it is surely wrong to confuse their mistaken goals and interests with those of the system.

While I think that the main force of Mr. Rubin's argument is directed at the ever-present phenomenon of bad teaching, he

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does make some comments on the system, in this case the curriculum, as well. For the most part these comments are highly unorthodox and, although of course not for that reason, wrong. He seems, for example, not to be in favor of required courses in older English literature or of language requirements. Mr. Rubin represents a point of view—let the student study what he wants and he will eventually *want* to broaden out into other areas—that is much more relevant to high school and undergraduate education than to the graduate school.

It is surprising to find someone like Mr. Rubin, whom one would expect to be a foe of hyper-specialization, arguing a position considerably more parochial than that advocated by the objects of his attack. Among the tarnished virtues of the system is its insistence upon a certain breadth of knowledge, although this insistence is, paradoxically, maintained in the face of an increasing emphasis upon specialization. Thus the system at present curiously embodies the competing demands of researcher and teacher and accounts for much of the fogginess of current educational thought. What I take to be the chief problem of graduate education in the humanities is the collective unwillingness of all concerned to come to terms with these competing demands, all of them recognized and oft-lamented for many years.

An honest facing-up to this problem would, I think, result in the conclusion that what *is* wrong with graduate literary study is its specialist, research emphasis, the result of a long-standing, and false, analogy with science. Science, the thinking goes, is cumulative and develops or evolves as new problems are solved. This line of thought provides a rationale of sorts for humanistic scholarship. How else to justify, for instance, the more than one thousand journals that the Modern Language Association indexes each year? The analogy with science holds only for historical scholarship, so quite naturally scholarly work drifted into that area where justification was strongest. Critical scholarship is, of course, notoriously noncumulative. Nineteenth-century criticism is of interest only to students of the history of criticism. R. P. Blackmur will one day join George Puttenham in history's exhibit of critical curios. Nevertheless, scholarly contributions, be they historical or critical, continue as the focus of academic endeavor.

All this is familiar enough, as is the sobering realization that its familiarity has done nothing toward improvement of the situation. The problem remains: graduate study is a self-perpetuating system that prepares young teachers for something quite other than their real task—introducing their students to a new and comprehensive life-style as well as to a certain body of information. As Paul Goodman and, more recently, Kenneth Keniston [AS: Winter, 1962-63] have noted, college teachers are increasingly becoming the focus of student attention as personal exemplars. It is in this role of "shaping the self-definitions and ideals of youth" that most graduate students want to succeed, and rightly so. Education, at least in the colleges, is not professional training for a scholarly career (or any career), but an introduction to something considerably larger.

One need not fall into the excesses of the sugary, life-adjustment evangelism (as I perhaps have) to consider his students as something other than potential authors of scholarly articles. The idea of education as an introduction to a life-style is hardly new. William Johnson Cory, a master at Eton, said much the same thing more than a century ago:

> . . . you go to a great school, not for knowledge so much as for arts and habits; for the habit of attention, for the art of expression, for the art of assuming at a moment's notice a new intellectual posture, for the art of entering quickly into another person's thoughts, for the habit of submitting to censure and refutation, for the art of indicating assent and dissent in graduated terms, for the habit of regarding minute points of accuracy, for the habit of working out what is possible in a given time, for taste, for discrimination, for mental courage and mental soberness. Above all, you go to a great school for self-knowledge.

MICHAEL BLISS
Claremont Graduate School

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As a twenty-five-year-old student who recently received the Master of Arts degree in "English," and as one who will be proceeding to doctoral study soon, I naturally read Mr. Rubin's article with great interest; however, my response was, first, that the Ph.D. programs of which I have knowledge are not at all like the ones Rubin tells of, and, second, that even if they were, the situation would not be as bad as Rubin suggests.

Mr. Rubin criticizes two accepted institutions: the methodology of contemporary Ph.D. programs in literature, and the values of that methodology. He misses the main mark in two respects: first, his description of graduate study overgeneralizes about current situations, and, second, he fails to recognize the values of what he criticizes.

The professors I have known who held the Ph.D. were not stultified men, conditioned to intellectual myopia because of disregard for their sensitivities during their doctoral work; also, the university catalogs I have examined indicate that doctoral study emphasizes the relationship between literature and the individual, and investigates how literature achieves its intrinsic worth. I received the impression from university catalogs that the graduate faculties of these universities felt that literature had value in relation to the individual and that the purpose of graduate study was to awaken scholars to such values, so that they could present literature to students, thereby promulgating both literary and personal values. Such a procedure is what Rubin advocates, and it seems to me currently extant.

The progressiveness of these universities shows in the courses offered in literary aesthetics, in comparative forms, in creative writing, and in their attention to relatively modern (since 1940) literature. Further evidence exists in the products of these universities, men with a zest for living and working, for inquiry, and for leading students into new intellectual territory. The despair of Mr. Rubin's Mr. R_____ H_____ has certainly been rare in my experience.

Rubin's second objection, to the tasks assigned Ph.D. students, is as faulty as his opinions of graduate study in general. Mr. Rubin is too ready to disregard traditional methods which involve historical approaches. Even if all graduate study were historically oriented, the limitations of the historical approach do not destroy its values. While literary study should not be confined to historical matter entirely, it should certainly not be divorced from it.

Mr. Rubin propounds a young man who covertly desires, as do many teachers and students of literature, to write novels. The implications are that the young man seeks not to contribute to man's understanding of himself, but merely to "write novels." One suspects the young man seeks lionization, not truth. This young man also thinks the way to success as a novelist lies in the academic world, and Rubin suggests that the soporific tasks imposed upon this youngster during his graduate years may kill the budding novelist beneath. Rubin also has the temerity to suggest that this would be a loss. Such an attitude implies that the purpose of graduate literary study is to produce novelists by coddling those whose weak germs of creativity cannot be subjected to the normal intellectual rigors of graduate study. If the young man's creativity were so easily dispossessed by the rigors of graduate study, then his germ of genius was not worth worrying about. At any rate, the purpose of graduate literary study is not to produce novelists, but to produce aware readers and teachers of aware readers.

The accommodating changes of system that Rubin suggests are too sympathetic to so delicately sensitive a student who cannot maintain his own being under pressure. Mr. Rubin encourages mediocrity by encouraging the insufficient student to acquire the Ph.D. He would seem to fit the system to individual capacity, a process not without some applicability, but one that leads to lowering of standards—indeed, denial of standards—without regard for the values of the system. Rubin's young man is most pathetic when he must do work intended to teach him the organization of the library. I do not see any unfair imposition in requiring this young man to familiarize himself with the library, if he does not know about it, and if he already knows about it, he should be able to breeze through his busy

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work without any stultification of his genius.

Mr. Rubin, it seems to me, invites an appalling system of graduate study that would grind out mediocre novelists like a sausage mill. I would prefer that some of the grub-streeters of today enroll in a few graduate courses and find some worthwhile application for their talents. Granted, as Rubin points out, many successful novelists, poets, and scholars do not hold the Ph.D.; however, Rubin fails to remember that diverse opinions about the men he lists are extant, and that perhaps some of those he lists would have been better stultified.

DON SHARP
University of Alaska

MR. RUBIN replies:

My critique of the dominant modes of graduate literary study was as detailed and as specific as I could manage in a medium-length essay. Those who disagreed with it—and I knew that many would do so—ought, I thought, at least to be able to offer some concrete refutation of my arguments. Instead, what is the response?

The distinguished emeritus dean of Yale University, Mr. DeVane, wishes to know which graduate school it was that I attended—the implication being that it must have been a second-rate school to give me so warped an idea of graduate study. The fact is that I was not drawing on my own experience, which was both highly pleasurable and highly untypical, but on the experience of my students, my colleagues, my acquaintances.

The chairman of the Department of English at the University of Virginia, Mr. Bowers, descends to the personal level by suggesting that since I do not teach at a university myself, I can know nothing whatever about graduate study! Also, his assistant professor, Mr. Beaurline, calls me an ass.

Mr. Irving Richards advances the following proposition: because Diana Trilling has recently published an excellent essay on Edith Wharton, I am wrong in wanting the study of literature to take precedence over the study of literary history.

Mr. Howard O. Brogan declares that since scholarship is hard work, I am mistaken in believing that it can or should be an enjoyable experience.

Mr. Michael Bliss quotes a pasasge from an English headmaster that, so far as I can make out, seems to bear out my position, not his.

Mr. Don Sharp decides that, since I feel that there should have been a place in doctoral study for such distinguished poet-critics as Eliot, Blackmur and others, I therefore think that all graduate students should be novelists.

Such are the mature arguments advanced in response to an essay criticizing graduate literary study in America for over-emphasizing historical, bibliographical and philological research to the avoidance of the value judgments required by the act of literary criticism.

It is almost comical. Most amusing of all is the spectacle of Mr. Bowers and his supporters at the University of Virginia leaping about in panic, here and in other places, at my suggestion that textual bibliography ought not to be the chief goal of literary study. If only Mr. Bowers and his protégés *were* correct in asserting that emphasis on historical and bibliographical marginalia at the expense of concern for literary values went out of fashion twenty-five years ago. Since my essay appeared, I have received all too much renewed evidence to the contrary, in the form of almost a hundred letters from graduate students, ex-graduate students and future graduate students all across the country, describing graduate literary study as they have been forced to engage in it (and at some of our best schools, too)—no, I did not exaggerate. I wish those letters could be copied and distributed to everyone who thinks that what I termed "'solid historical scholarship,' 'original research,' tedious, Teutonic source hunting and philological analysis, ponderous philosophical ventures in the history of ideas and so forth" no longer characterize American graduate study. A sad business, truly.

So far as I am concerned, my indictment stands. Graduate literary study as typically conducted in so many universities today is designed for "literary historians, for bibliographers, for historians of ideas. It is not designed to train those who would approach literature as individual works of the imagination, as imagic orderings of experience." Good men, wise men can triumph over it, as many have done. But they do so in spite of the present Ph.D. system. It is the system that is wrong. Until it is remedied, the study of literature shall continue to lose ground to the measuring sciences, and humane learning wither accordingly.

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REAPPRAISALS

Veblen and the New Class

DANIEL BELL

Periodically there is a renewed wave of interest in Thorstein Veblen's *The Engineers and the Price System*. The sudden vogue of technocracy in 1932 led to the reissue of the book, and for a while it became a best seller, with an average sale of a hundred and fifty copies a week. In recent years, the rapid expansion of the technical class of employees (in 1900, there was one engineer for every 225 factory workers; in 1950, one for every 62; and in 1960, one for every 20), the rise of computer technology and automation, the engineering exploration of space, and the new prestige of the scientist have all focused attention on the strategic importance of the technologists, and these speculations recall the excitement that greeted Veblen's book when it was first published in 1919 as a series of essays in *The Dial* and then in 1921 as a book.

The reasons for this excitement are not hard to find. *The Engineers and the Price System* is one of Veblen's few prophetic books. The tantalizing "Memorandum on a Practicable Soviet of Technicians," the concluding essay, is *not*, as the blurb writer proclaimed on the jacket of the 1932 reissued volume, "to the engineers what the Communist Manifesto purported to be for the proletariat," for Veblen opens and closes that chapter with the ironic statement that "under existing circumstances there need be no fear, and no hope of an effectual revolutionary overturn in America" that could "flutter the sensibilities" of the Guardians of the Vested Interests. But the context of the book does seek to establish a drift of history and an agenda for the future.

> Revolutions in the eighteenth century [Veblen wrote] were military and political; and the Elder Statesmen who now believe themselves to be making history still believe that revolutions can be made and unmade by the same ways and means in the twentieth century. But any substantial or effectual overturn in the twentieth century will necessarily be an industrial overturn; and by the same token, any twentieth century revolution can be combatted or neutralized only by industrial ways and means.

In this respect, *The Engineers and the Price System* is squarely in the center of the preoccupation that has attended the rise of sociology since its beginnings in the nineteenth century: namely, the scanning of the historical skies for portents of "the new class" that will overturn the existing social order. Henri de Saint-Simon, the master of Auguste Comte and one of the fathers of modern sociology, initiated this quest in 1816 when he began publishing an irregular periodical, *L'Industrie* (although he did not actually coin it, he popularized the term *industrialism*), which sought to describe the society of the future. Past society, Saint-Simon said, had been military society, in which the chief figures were priests, warriors and feudal lords—"the parasites" and

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✪ DANIEL BELL, a former editor of *Fortune* magazine, is professor of sociology at Columbia University and a member of the Editorial Board of the SCHOLAR. This essay will appear as the introduction to a new edition of Veblen's *The Engineers and the Price System* to be published by Harcourt, Brace and World. Mr. Bell is author of *The End of Ideology* and editor of the recently published collection of essays, *The Radical Right*.

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consumers of wealth. The new industrial society, he said, would be ruled by the producers—the engineers and the entrepreneurs, the "coming men" of the times. Karl Marx, of course, made the confrontation of capitalist and worker the central figure of his drama of modern history, but already in his time some of Marx's opponents, such as Mikhail Bakunin and Alexander Herzen, were warning the workers that the victory of socialism would lead not to a classless society but to the emergence of a new class, the intellectuals ruling in the name of the workers. The identity of this new class has been central to the elitist sociology of Mosca, Michels and Pareto. James Burnham achieved a flash of notoriety in the early 1940's with his theme (a vulgarization of the work of two European syndicalists, Waclaw Machajski and Bruno Rizzi) of "the managerial revolution" as the coming stage of collectivist society. In American sociology, Harold Lasswell has written (most notably in his *World Politics and Personal Insecurity*) of the "skill groups" that must inevitably dominate any future society.

And in this regard Veblen, too, must be ranked on the side of the elitists. *If* a revolution were to come about in the United States—as a practiced skeptic, he was highly dubious of that prospect—it would not be led by a minority political party, as in Soviet Russia, which was a loose-knit and backward industrial region, nor would it come from the trade-union "votaries of the dinner pail," who, as a vested interest themselves, simply sought to keep prices up and labor supply down. It would occur, he said, along the lines "already laid down by the material conditions of its productive industry." And, turning this Marxist prism to his own perceptions, Veblen continued:

> These main lines of revolutionary strategy are lines of technical organization and industrial management; essentially lines of industrial engineering; such as will fit the organization to take care of the highly technical industrial system that constitutes the indispensable material foundation of any modern civilized community.

The heart of Veblen's assessment of the revolutionary class is thus summed up in his identification of the "production engineers" as the indispensable "General Staff of the industrial system."

> Without their immediate and unremitting guidance and correction the industrial system will *not work. It is a mechanically organized struc*ture of the technical processes designed, installed and conducted by the production engineers. Without them and their constant attention to the industrial equipment, the mechanical appliances of industry, will foot up to just so much junk.

Thus the intellectual commitment was made: "The chances of anything like a Soviet in America, therefore, are the chances of a Soviet of technicians"—although, as was his wont, Veblen immediately backs off by remarking that "anything like a Soviet of Technicians is at the most a remote contingency in America." Given his style of exaggerated circumlocution and deliberate indirection, this is, at best, what we can pin Veblen down to saying: *If* a revolution ever could come about in the United States, a revolution that would break the power of the vested interests, it would come from the engineers, who have a true motive for revolution—since the requirements of profit-making must traduce their calling—and who have the strategic position and the means to carry through a revolution.

In a curious way, all of this represented a radical departure for Veblen. Before 1919 he had paid little attention to the engineers, although one of the persistent themes of his major work, *The Theory of Business Enterprise,* is the inherent conflict between "business," the financial interests who are concerned primarily with profit and "industry," those forces that are geared to production. His fundamental concept, the idea of the "machine process," implied that because of the rationality of the machine a new race of men was being bred who replaced rule-of-thumb methods or intuitive skills with reasoned procedures based on the discipline of science. Yet he had never before tied these themes to the engineer. Typically, Veblen always left his concepts magnificently abstract, or he skillfully played the game of personification (for example, "the captains of industry") in which

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the social role rather than the person was manifest. Now, in 1919, Veblen seemingly made a basic sociological commitment—the identification of a concrete social group as the force that could, and possibly would, reshape society.

The postwar period was a critical one in Veblen's life, and the books he wrote at this time, *The Vested Interests and the State of the Industrial Arts* and *The Engineers and the Price System,* do bear a somewhat different relation to his purposes than does the rest of his work. It would be too much to say that Veblen in this period had hopes of becoming a revolutionary leader; this was out of keeping with his dour personality and the heavy personal armor with which he kept most of the world, and even his friends, at a distance. But it does seem that Veblen suddenly felt that he might become a prophet (he had always been an oracle, and his writings were suitably Delphic) who would rouse the latent forces of change in America. And among these forces—or so he was led to believe by some of his disciples—were the engineers.

THE ACADEMIC FLOATER. In 1919, at the age of sixty-two, Veblen had begun a new life, although two years earlier it had seemed as if his career were at an end.* Less than twenty years before, he had written his first book, *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (having had to guarantee almost all the costs of publication himself), and this book, largely through the efforts of William Dean Howells, had gained him widespread attention. His second book, *The Theory of Business Enterprise,* published in 1904, won him the even more intense admiration of an eager group of young economists. But "professionally" this farm-boy son of Norwegian immigrants was a "failure."

Throughout his life, Veblen was unable to find a permanent niche in the academic hierarchy. Although he had completed his Ph.D. at Yale at the age of twenty-seven (a remarkable achievement, considering the fact that he spoke almost no English until he entered the preparatory division of Carleton College when he was seventeen), Veblen did not get his first academic job until he was thirty-five, when J. Lawrence Laughlin, with whom he had studied economics at Cornell, took him along to the nascent University of Chicago as a Fellow. Veblen stayed at the University of Chicago for fourteen years, but the administration regarded him with a cold eye (as much for his amatory difficulties as for his economic heresies), and he never rose higher than an assistant professorship, despite his publishing the aforementioned books, editing the *Journal of Political Economy,* and writing half a dozen major essays, including those on Karl Marx and socialist economics reprinted in *The Place of Science in Modern Civilization.*

In 1906 Veblen was offered a post as associate professor of economics at Stanford University by David Starr Jordan, who was trying to strengthen the school's academic reputation. For the first time, Veblen had an opportunity to move up the academic ladder, but his stay at Stanford University was dismal. Veblen was indifferent about his courses and uninterested in his students, and, to cap it all, he became involved in an adulterous episode that became a campus scandal. In December of 1909 he was forced to resign his post. For a year Veblen was unable to find another job, and then, through the intervention of a former stu-

* In this section, and the next few, I have drawn largely on Joseph Dorfman's fine biography of Veblen, *Thorstein Veblen and His America* (New York: Viking Press, 1934), and, in particular, on two unpublished Ph.D. theses, Samuel Haber's "Scientific Management and the Progressive Movement" (University of California at Berkeley, 1961) and Edwin T. Layton's "The American Engineering Profession and the Idea of Social Responsibility" (University of California at Los Angeles, 1956). In addition, I have profited considerably from Mr. Layton's article "Veblen and the Engineers," in the *American Quarterly* (XIV, Spring, 1962), although I think he overstates Veblen's confusions of the distinctions between different types of engineers. Additional sources were the article "Veblen *and* Technocracy," by Leon Ardzrooni, in *Living Age,* March, 1933; *Scientific Management and the Unions,* by Milton Nadworny (Harvard University Press, 1955); the biography of Morris L. Cooke, *The Life and Times of a Happy Liberal,* by Kenneth Trombley (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1954); and David Riesman's provocative psychoanalytic interpretation, *Thorstein Veblen* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1953).

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dent, H. J. Davenport, he was invited to the University of Missouri as a lecturer.

For seven years Veblen suffered the small-town oppressiveness of Columbia, Missouri. He tried desperately to leave, going so far as to apply to the Library of Congress for a routine bibliographical position—he was turned down as being too bright for the job. During the dispirited years at Missouri, Veblen's output slackened. He wrote *The Instinct of Workmanship,* an uneven book that reflects more sharply than any of his others the evolutionary anthropology that guided his viewpoint, and (after a summer in Europe in 1914) *Imperial Germany and the Industrial Revolution,* a brilliant account of the way German feudal culture had grafted a highly advanced technology on the society in order to promote dynastic ends.

In 1917, by "mutual consent," Veblen took a leave of absence from the University of Missouri to go to Washington; he never returned to formal academic life. A year later he celebrated his departure by publishing *The Higher Learning in America,* whose subtitle, "A Memorandum on the Conduct of the Universities by Businessmen," only hints at its savage indictment of higher education. (The manuscript, written a few years before he left Missouri, had been withheld from publication at the suggestion of the University's president; its original subtitle had been "A Study in Total Depravity.")

The war itself engaged all of Veblen's attention and energy. His stay in Germany and his tolerance of Woodrow Wilson (not his faith in Wilson, since Veblen was incapable of any such commitment) led him to support the Allied cause. He believed, moreover, that the war not only would demonstrate the requirements of rational planning, because of the need to mobilize total capacity, but would allow the victorious Allied nations to make an attempt at social reconstruction. In 1916, working at feverish speed, Veblen had written *An Inquiry into the Nature of Peace and the Terms of Its Perpetuation* (published largely at his own expense), which expounded these ideas. Making a distinction between democratic and dynastic governments, Veblen noted that in the latter the survival of "barbarian" impulses made them consistently more aggressive and warlike; "perpetual peace," he concluded, could be maintained not only by finally disposing of all monarchial regimes, but by eliminating everywhere "the price-system and its attendant business enterprise"—Veblen's euphemism for capitalism.

The book came out at a propitious psychological moment. By the spring of 1917, when *The Nature of Peace* was published, virtually the entire intelligentsia of the progressive movement (Herbert Croly, Walter Lippman, John Dewey) as well as the intellectual leaders of the Socialist Party (William English Walling, John Spargo, A. M. Simons, Jack London, Upton Sinclair) were supporting America's entry into the war and repudiating their earlier anti-war stands. *The Nature of Peace* allowed the intelligentsia both to justify its attitude against German militarism and to hope for the emergence of a new rational society after the war. The book was an immediate success and was praised in all the liberal magazines. Francis Hackett, an editor of the *New Republic,* which was the organ of the progressive intelligentsia, called it "the most momentous work in English on the encompassment of lasting peace," and the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace purchased five hundred copies for distribution in colleges and universities. Veblen quickly became an international figure, and letters were written to him from all parts of the world. "Now," he said, "they are beginning to pay some attention to me."

It was in this mood that, in October 1917, Veblen went to Washington. As his biographer, Joseph Dorfman, remarks, "He wanted to be at the centre of things, and he hoped that he could be made use of on the paramount questions of the plans for peace." He saw Newton D. Baker, the Secretary of War, and Supreme Court Justice Louis D. Brandeis, but no one in a high position was interested in Veblen's ideas. He was invited to submit some memoranda to a group (whose secretary was Walter Lippman, then

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of the *New Republic*) that had been set up by Wilson's confidant, Colonel Edward M. House, to prepare material on the terms of a possible peace settlement. One of Veblen's two memoranda discussed the problem of creating a "League of Pacific Peoples"; the other, on the "Economic Penetration of Backward Countries and of Foreign Investments," proposed the regulation of investment by the "Pacific League." Both were duly filed, and Veblen, discouraged, took a job with the statistical division of the Food Administration, where, with the aid of Isadore Lubin, he prepared a study of price control on foodstuffs.

Meanwhile Veblen's books, with their cool, sardonic tone, were getting the author into trouble. Although the Committee on Information, an official propaganda agency, praised his *Imperial Germany*, the Post Office Department, which was in charge of censorship, declared the book nonmailable under the Espionage Act. The American Defense Society and other jingoist groups complained to the Department of Justice about Veblen's attitude in *The Nature of Peace* and *Imperial Germany* (complained, that is, at the mocking treatment of the democracies). "The book," says Dorfman, "was read by an agent of the department who, although he could not understand Veblen's vocabulary, found the program for the punishing of Germany so far ahead of anything that had been proposed by the entente, that he concluded that Veblen was a superpatriot, and refused to pay any attention to the complaints."

His fruitless work with the Food Administration had ended, the University of Missouri was behind him—Veblen was again without a job. Negotiations with Cornell University came to nothing. Two of his former students, Walton Hamilton and Walter Stewart, arranged for Veblen to give a series of lectures at Amherst in May, 1918, and shortly afterward Jett Lauck, another former student, who was executive secretary of the War Labor Board, offered Veblen a job with the Board as an examiner, at $4800 a year—ironically, higher than any academic salary he had ever received. Veblen at first agreed to take the job, but when, through the intervention of Horace Kallen, he was invited to join the editorial board of the *Dial*, he gladly accepted. The *Dial* was to be the occasion of a short but significant new phase in his life.

POSTWAR DISILLUSIONMENT. In June, 1918, Veblen moved to New York and joined the *Dial*. The magazine had an old and honorable name in American letters. The first *Dial* had been founded by Ralph Waldo Emerson and Margaret Fuller in 1840, and it was the parent of all the hundreds of little magazines that followed. Like many of its progeny, the original *Dial* had a short but brilliant life. Failing to gain more than three hundred subscribers, it suspended publication in 1844. In 1880 a Chicago publisher revived the name and continued to publish it as a sedate fortnightly review; in 1916 it was reorganized by Martyn Johnson as a literary journal with a staff consisting of Conrad Aiken, Randolph Bourne, Padraic Colum and Van Wyck Brooks. Two years later, under the influence of one of its owners, Helen Marot, a liberal woman who had written *American Labor Unions, by a Member, Helen Marot,* the magazine announced its removal to New York and a broadening of its scope to include "internationalism and a program of reconstruction in industry and education." The editors were to be John Dewey, Thorstein Veblen, Helen Marot and George Donlin, and the magazine set out to compete directly with the *Nation* and the *New Republic*. Veblen, clearly, was its star.

His experiences in Washington had left him bitter and resentful. The extraordinary thing was that he had lived his entire life, if not in an ivory tower, at least in its academic banlieues, and his protective tone of irony, his superior gamesmanship in the mimetic combat of pedantry, had not really prepared him to operate in the bureaucratic labyrinths of power. As David Riesman remarks:

> In all this, Veblen appears to have been somewhat naïve to assume that an elderly professor, inexperienced in practical affairs, would be eagerly welcomed, even by sympathizers in office. He expected miracles from the War itself—

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and possibly also as a result of his own willingness to come out, at long last, from behind his shell.

A woman spurned in love turns to reform as a second choice; a man scorned by power often turns to revolution. Veblen had always been subversive in his verbal irony; now, in the next two years, from 1919 to 1921, he began to entertain hopes, always somewhat masked, of becoming an active political force. A sense of revolutionary excitement was in the air and Veblen responded to it strongly. Writing as a journalist for the general public, he slashed out, more overtly than he had ever before, at the "vested interests" and their control of industry. He became intensely interested in the Russian Revolution (although he was never active in the "workers' soviet" formed at the *Dial* in the summer of 1919!), and in an article in *The Dial,* "Bolshevism Is a Menace—to Whom?" Veblen interpreted Bolshevism simply as the carrying of the principle of democracy into industry, or as just another name for the industrial republic.

More than that, Veblen was becoming popular, even something of a fad. *The Theory of the Leisure Class* had been reissued; it was approved by *Vanity Fair,* the magazine of the sophisticates, and had become required reading in intellectual circles. The essays in the *Dial* were widely read, although an old friend of Veblen's, Walton Hamilton, felt that as a journalist, Veblen the agitator and phrasemaker was taking precedence over the thinker. Reviewing in the *New Republic* the first group of essays, published in book form as *The Vested Interests,* Hamilton remarked that even though readers would take over the phrases—in many cases they were quite imponderable when analyzed—sympathizers would get more "psychic income than intellectual ammunition from the volume."

But Veblen's savage mood reflected accurately the combination of postwar disillusionment, revolutionary anger, nihilism and Dadaism that was dominating the intellectual circles, and he, in turn, responded to these currents.

It was during this period, too, that Veblen wrote one of his most incisive essays, "The Intellectual Pre-Eminence of Jews in Modern Europe" (in the *Political Science Quarterly* of March, 1919), which is at the same time a revealing self-portrait of the Norwegian farm-boy who had left his own hermetic culture. The intellectually gifted Jew, he wrote, like other men in a similar position, secures immunity from intellectual quietism

> at the cost of losing his secure place in the scheme of conventions into which he has been born, and . . . of finding no similarly secure place in the scheme of gentile conventions into which he is thrown. . . . He becomes a disturber of the intellectual peace, but only at the cost of becoming an intellectual wayfaring man, a wanderer in the intellectual No Man's Land, seeking another place to rest, farther along the road, somewhere over the horizon. They are neither a complaisant nor a contented lot, these aliens of the uneasy feet.

In April, 1919, Veblen began a new series in the *Dial,* on "Contemporary Problems in Reconstruction," which, according to an announcement in the magazine, was intended to be "a concrete application of [Veblen's] theory, outlined in *The Modern Point of View and the New Order.*" These essays, later brought out in book form, became *The Engineers and the Price System.*

The heart of the book is in the last three essays. The first three sketch themes Veblen had already discussed in previous writings, although at this point he singled out the investment banker rather than the corporation head as the dominant figure in economic life ("regulating the rate and volume of output" in industrial enterprises under his control); and the old corporation financier is no longer a captain of industry but a lieutenant of finance. Specifically the last three essays, beginning with the chapter "On the Danger of a Revolutionary Overturn," represent a political departure from his earlier work.

These essays were written at the height of the "red scare," the drumfire campaign initiated by Attorney General A. Mitchell Palmer, which included wholesale roundups of suspected radicals, raids on various radical meetings (including the breakup of

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the underground convention of the nascent Communist party in Bridgman, Michigan) and the deportation of anarchists. Against the same threat of revolution, about twenty states began passing criminal syndicalist laws, which made advocacy, rather than acts, of violence, a crime.

Veblen's essays, as Dorfman has noted, were "conspicuous for their recklessness and their savage use of inverted meaning." Bolshevism, Veblen says, is the danger that "the Vested Interests are facing," and "the Elder Statesmen are . . . in a position to know, without much inquiry, that there is no single spot or corner in civilized Europe, or America, where the underlying population would have anything to lose by such an overturn of the established order as would cancel the vested rights of privilege and property, whose guardian they are."

Some observers, continued Veblen, foresee a revolutionary overturn in two years; others, less intimately acquainted with the facts, predict a later date. Veblen, tongue in cheek, constantly reiterates that the Guardians of the Vested Interests have nothing to fear, but in each case the statement carries the sly addition "just yet." It is in this context that Veblen began to write of the engineers in words that seemed to say, "And now, I hear the tocsin of revolution, and it cannot be far away."

"Hitherto these men, who so make up the general staff of the industrial system, have not drawn together into anything like a self-directing working force," he writes. But —"Right lately these technologists have begun to become uneasily 'class-conscious' and to reflect that they together constitute the indispensable General Staff of the industrial system. Their class consciousness has taken the immediate form of a growing sense of waste and confusion in the management of industry by the financial agents of the absentee owners. . . . So the engineers are beginning to draw together and ask themselves, 'What about it?' "

In all this, Veblen's mode of calculated ambiguity and abstracted specification heightens the tension, building up hints of an extraordinary ground swell among the engineers. But no persons are ever identified, no groups are ever named. In pointing to the sources of unrest, Veblen refers generally to "the consulting engineer" and "the management expert" who, in appraising the efficiency of business enterprises for the investment banker, have come to understand the "pervading lag, lack and friction" in the industrial system, and to the "younger generation," trained in the "stubborn logic of technology," who are "beginning to draw together on a common ground of understanding."

And yet it was Veblen, and not the Guardians of the Vested Interests, who was deceived. The movement that he thought was a "class-conscious effort" by engineers to end the "all-pervading mismanagement of industry" was, in its most immediate organizational thrust, an attempt to give engineers a distinct "professional" status in society. In its extremely vague import, it was a chimerical "technocratic eudaemonism" that resembled, if it resembled anything at all, Plato's Republic, but ruled by the engineer rather than the philosopher.

The "movement," if it can even be characterized by that term, was largely the work of two men, Morris L. Cooke and Henry Gantt. And, such is the comedy of the thing, it represented not a revolutionary dissenting group, but an effort by messianic disciples of Frederick W. Taylor, the "father" of scientific management, to extend Taylor's ideas, as they understood them, to American society at large.

THE GOSPEL OF EFFICIENCY. Frederick W. Taylor, a fascinating, if nowadays neglected, figure, was indisputably the shaper of "modern" capitalism. If any social upheaval can ever be attributed to a single person, the logic of efficiency as the rule of contemporary life is due to him. For what he did was to establish the principle and methods for the rationalization of work. But Taylor was more than an engineer. In his own mind's eye, he was a prophet who felt that he had discovered the "scientific principles" that would settle all social conflicts.

This *éclaircissement* began when Taylor in 1882, then working as a mechanical engi-

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neer at the Midvale Steel Company in Philadelphia, became discouraged by the fact that the workmen he directed refused to work as fast as he thought they should. The solution, he felt, lay in the fact that no one knew what constituted a "fair day's work," and one reason was that not even management had any notion of a man's capacity, the fatigue a specific job engendered, the pace at which a man should work, the number of pieces that could be turned out in a specified period of time, or the speed at which any particular set of operations should take place. Out of Taylor's reflections (and his own compulsive character) came the idea of scientific time study and, more broadly, the measurement of work—for it is with the measurement of work and the idea of unit costs, rather than with the introduction of the factory as such, that modern industry gains distinctive meaning as a new way of life—and, following this, the practice of scientific management.

Taylor's principles were based upon the following: the time it takes to do a specific job; incentives and bonus systems for exceeding norms; differential rates of pay based on job evaluation; the standardization of tools and equipment; the fitting of men to jobs on the basis of physical and mental tests; and the removal of all planning and scheduling from the work floor itself into a new planning and scheduling department, a new superstructure, the responsibility for which was in the hands of the engineer. By setting "scientific" standards, Taylor felt that he could specify the "one best way" or the "natural laws" of work, and so remove the basic source of antagonism between worker and employer—what is "fair" or "unfair."

Morris L. Cooke, one of the two men Veblen had in mind when he spoke of the "uneasy . . . sense of waste and confusion" felt by the "General Staff of the industrial system," was a Philadelphia-born mechanical engineer who, while working in a number of shipyards before the turn of the century, was "sickened by the heartlessness on the part of the employers" and the "inefficiency on the part of the workers." Discovering the work of Frederick W. Taylor while he was in this mood, Cooke responded like a religious convert.

To Cooke, and to many other young engineers, Taylor's ideas were excitingly "progressive," and the standpat resistance of turn-of-the-century industry to these innovations only reinforced their fervor. Moreover, Cooke and the others felt that such a conception of the engineer gave him a new professional status and that crucial recognition that hitherto he had been denied. Even further, Cooke was lured, as were other engineers, by Taylor's gospel declaration that "the same principles [of scientific management] can be applied with equal force to all social activities: to the management of our homes; the management of our farms; the management of the business of our tradesmen large and small; of our churches, our philanthropic institutions, our universities, and our governmental departments." In effect, the engineer was to be the hierophant of the new society.

About 1910, when Taylor's ideas were beginning to catch on rapidly, hundreds of persons proclaimed themselves "efficiency engineers," promising to install his "system" in half the two to four years' time Taylor had felt necessary for the conversion of a plant. The prophet of scientific management openly announced that only four engineers were authorized to teach his theories. "They were men who had worked with him intimately and knew his every thought and wish." These four were C. G. Barth, H. K. Hathaway, Morris L. Cooke and Henry L. Gantt. "Taylor let it be known that these four only had his blessing and that all others were operating on their own." *

Henry L. Gantt had been Taylor's chief assistant in the early experiments at the Midvale Steel Plant and later at the Bethlehem Steel Company. Later he became an independent consulting engineer, installing the Taylor system into many different factories and earning the enmity of the American Federation of Labor, which, in 1914, had opened a campaign against "scientific

* Trombley, *op. cit.*

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management." In 1916, a year after Taylor's death, Gantt became the spokesman of a new technocratic orientation. Under the influence of Veblen, whose works he had begun to read, and of Charles Ferguson, an engineer and "an eccentric social gospeller, who wanted to reform business in order to develop its spiritual potentialities,"* Gantt founded an organization called the New Machine. Gantt attacked the incompetence of the "financiers" and argued that the community should not have to bear the costs of such inefficiency. He assumed that the business system was going to collapse, and that the ground had to be prepared for his successor. In one of his essays, Gantt declared, "We can no longer follow the lead of those who have axes to grind, disregarding economic laws; but must accord leadership to him who knows what to do and how to do it for the benefit of the community. This man is the engineer."

The New Machine, however, was never a formal organization. It held a few discussion meetings which brought together about thirty-five interested engineers, but its only official act was to send a letter, in February, 1917, to President Wilson, arguing that the industrial system would grow "only through a progressive elimination of plutocracy and all other forms of arbitrary power." Most of the group was quickly involved in war work, including Gantt, who, working with the Ordnance Department, produced the famous Gantt Charts, a graphical analysis designed to permit quick and easy understanding of the state of production at any given time. And the New Machine lay dormant. Gantt, who never met Veblen, although he was friendly with Veblen's disciple, Leon Ardzrooni, was thus one of the chief sources of Veblen's idea of the impending revolutionary consciousness of the engineers.

Morris L. Cooke, whom Veblen did meet, was the other chief source, and it was Cooke's effort to reform the American Society of Mechanical Engineers that Veblen mistook for a new "class-conscious" activity. In 1905 when Frederick W. Taylor became president of the Society, he asked Cooke to conduct an analysis of its affairs and reorganize its procedures in accordance with the principles of scientific management. At this same time Cooke began to realize that the Society was dominated by engineers employed by big business firms and the public utilities. In 1911 he became director of public works for the city of Philadelphia, as part of a reform administration. Seeking to examine the electric rates charged the city by the private utilities, Cooke was outraged to discover that while these utilities were able to enlist the services of the most eminent members of the engineering profession, almost no prominent engineer was willing to act as a consultant for the city.

In 1915 Cooke was elected a vice-president of the A.S.M.E. and became the leader of a faction seeking to reform the organization. He attacked the Society's ties with the corporations, charging that the professional status of the engineers was being compromised by their subordination to big business. By 1919 Cooke had succeeded. The A.S.M.E. was reorganized to sever its ties with business and trade associations, and a new code of ethics was adopted, which stated that the first professional obligation of the engineer was to the standards of his profession, not to his employer. Thus, the ferment within the American Society of Mechanical Engineers, and some of Cooke's papers that led to the reorganization of the Society, provided another source for Veblen's memorandum about the "Soviet of Technicians."

Veblen had been introduced to the writings of Cooke and Gantt by a friend at Stanford, Guido Marx, who was a professor of machine design. Cooke supplied Marx with copies of his papers, and probably of Gantt's as well; Marx, who had kept up a correspondence with Veblen, in turn sent them on to him. It seems clear that, in the heightened political excitement of the day, Veblen not only had some literary plans about the engineers, but that he—or his disciples—also nursed some vague expectations of actually inspiring a new movement that would look to him for prophetic leadership.

* Layton, *op. cit.*

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In the fall of 1919 Veblen left the *Dial,* which in the course of reorganization had become a literary magazine, and joined the faculty of the newly founded New School for Social Research. The New School was an experiment in higher education. It set out to maintain postgraduate standards in the character of its courses, but to dispense with degrees, ceremonials, professional hierarchies and other trappings of academe. It assembled a distinguished faculty, which, besides Veblen, included Charles A. Beard, James Harvey Robinson, Wesley Clair Mitchell (all of whom resigned from Columbia University) and some other distinguished American figures in the social sciences.

When the New School began to function, Veblen was writing his series of articles on the "Soviet of Technicians." As Dorfman puts it: "He had become obsessed with the important role of the technician, and felt that the New School provided the opportunity and headquarters for the group he planned." In October of that year, Veblen wrote to Guido Marx, stating that "it is an intimate part of the ambitions of the New School to come into touch with the technical men who have to do with the country's industry, and know something about the state of things and the needs of industry." At the same time, he continued, "the younger generation among the technicians appear to be getting uneasy on their own account . . . and are loosely drawing together, and entering on an inquiry into the industrial conditions and speculating on a way out of the current muddle."

In sum, Veblen asked Marx to come to New York to give a course at the New School and to help in the direction of an industrial inquiry. Actually, Veblen saw Marx as a potential leader for these "young engineers." The suggestion was made directly to Marx by Leon Ardzrooni, Veblen's amanuensis, who was on the faculty of the New School. In December, Ardzrooni wrote to Marx:

> The situation is this: I have been hobnobbing with some of the members of the A.S.M.E. and find that they are very much upset about the present industrial muddle throughout the country. Some of them, with the connivance of certain prominent newspaper men, had nearly perfected plans to get together and discuss matters, under the guidance of H. L. Gantt. They are all convinced that there is something wrong somewhere, but they are still groping and need proper leadership. As you have probably heard, Gantt died quite recently, and, in speaking about the plans of these engineers, I told them we had in you the proper leader and, in case it was possible for you to come to New York, you could meet with them once a week, or oftener, and talk things over.

Marx assumed that some large movement was under way, and modestly suggested that Morris Cooke would be the more logical person to replace Gantt as the leader of engineers, but Ardzrooni "preferred Marx, doubtlessly because he was already something of a convert to Veblenism." Marx came to New York, and found, as he put it, that "no mature members of the A.S.M.E. appeared in the picture." A man named Howard Scott appeared proclaiming himself to be an engineer, but as Marx observed, "I could not believe he was a trained technician, his use of technical terms being highly inaccurate and his thought processes, to my mind, lacking in logical structure and being basically unrealistic." A conference was organized by Marx ("in line with what I thought would best fulfill Veblen's plans") bringing together some of the new leaders of the A.S.M.E. (including Colonel Fred J. Miller, the president, and Cooke) and some of the New School faculty, but after a desultory session nothing further came of any proposed collaboration. Apparently Veblen continued to see Cooke, in particular to discuss a Giant Power Survey being undertaken by the engineers, but as Cooke remarked, "I must say that all my contacts with him were rather tenuous because he struck me as a man who was almost too frail for any kind of contacts. He was a bully good counsellor, but only as to theory. There was too little physique there to help on action."*

This seems to have been the sum total of all those dark hints about the emerging

* Dorfman, *op. cit.*

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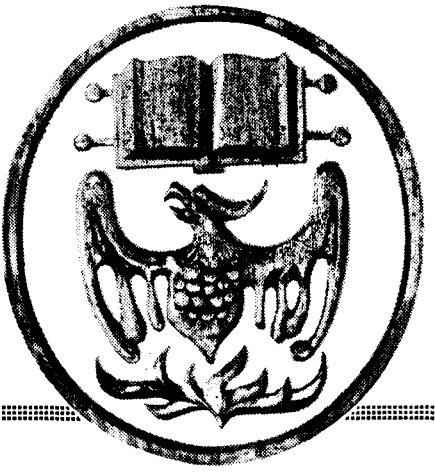

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class-consciousness of the "indispensable General Staff of the industrial system." Marx returned to California; Howard Scott organized a pretentious Technical Alliance, with himself listed as chief engineer, and a temporary organizing committee which included such personages as the architect Frederick Ackerman, the electrical engineers Bassett Jones and Charles Steinmetz, and some younger economists (Leland Olds and Stuart Chase) as well as Veblen (although, Ardzrooni noted, in a letter to Marx enclosing the prospectus, "I have learned that most men whose names . . . appear here [including Veblen] were never consulted or informed of any meeting").

In February, 1921, *The Engineers and the Price System* appeared in book form. The country was on its way back to normalcy. The American Society of Mechanical Engineers had settled down into its conservative groove. A similar reorganization had taken place in the American Institute of Mining Engineers, and its leader, Herbert Hoover, had become the national spokesman for all the insurgent engineers. (Cooke, who felt that Hoover was the "engineering method personified," had in 1919 endorsed Hoover for the Republican presidential nomination.) There was little to indicate that a Soviet of technicians was in the offing. Curiously, though, Veblen let his words stand as written, with no editorial revision or foreword. And so it stands, a record of misunderstanding.

Veblen's remaining life was a sorry epilogue to these disappointed hopes of establishing his intellectual leadership in the country. In 1922 the New School was drastically overhauled and of the "Big Four" Beard, Mitchell and Robinson resigned. Veblen wanted to leave but had nowhere to go. Efforts to find him a job in the city universities proved unsuccessful. His last major book, *Absentee Ownership*, was proving to be a gruelling effort, and, as Dorfman writes, "he resorted more often than before to Roget's *Thesaurus*." The book, which picks up and elaborates more directly the arguments of *The Theory of Business Enterprise* of two decades before, was only indifferently received—the conservatives felt that the prevailing prosperity seemed to refute Veblen's argument, and the radicals were annoyed because Veblen had asserted that "the standard formalities of 'Socialism' and 'Anti-Socialism' are obsolete in the face of the new alignment of economic forces."

His appointment at the New School having come to an end, for the next few years Veblen lived on small stipends contributed by a former student plus, for a while, some "winnings" from a quixotic foray in the stock market. He neglected economic writing, and, as "one of the things men do, when they grow old," he remarked, he turned back to the Norse tales and completed the translation of *The Laxdaela Saga* that he had begun thirty-seven years before. After the death of his first wife, Ellen Rolfe, in 1926, Veblen returned to California to live at his absentee properties in Stanford. New investments proved a failure, and Veblen, anxious about money, was supported by the generosity of his friends. On August 3, 1929, he died of heart failure.

VEBLEN, THE UTOPIAN. *The Engineers and the Price System* is a "short course" in the Veblenian system, and it can serve as a simplified introduction to his ideas. Veblen always felt the need in all his writings to start from "first principles" (since these were so much at variance with classical economics), and so almost all his books after *The Theory of the Leisure Class* seem inordinately repetitious. But if they are read in sequence, one can discern a spiral in which themes set forth in earlier books are picked up and elaborated as the basis for further argument. Thus the opening chapter of *The Engineers and the Price System* begins with a tongue-in-cheek account of "sabotage," a word hitherto used to describe the tactics of the radical syndicalists, but which Veblen defines as the restriction of output practiced by business to maintain levels of profit. This thesis, already set forth in *The Theory of the Business Enterprise*, Veblen now ties in with the role of the investment banker, whom he regards, in his postwar analysis, as the key figure in the organization pooling system of the Federal

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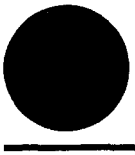

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Reserve. The investment banker becomes not only the stabilizer of the business system but also the figure who, in his effort to inflate values and restrict production, is responsible for business cycles and depressions. Thus the tension between nonutilized capacity and restriction becomes the central motif of the book and the basis for Veblen's conviction that if the engineer were to take over the direction of American society, there would be "the due allocation of resources and a consequent full and reasonably proportioned employment of the available equipment and manpower" of society.

There is much in *The Engineers and the Price System* that is surprisingly accurate and relevant to the present-day American economy. The 1958 Kefauver Committee reports on "administered prices" in the steel and auto industry read like a gloss of the opening chapter in Veblen's book. His wry comments on "salesmanship," the argument that salesmanship is a substitute for price reduction ("It is the chief factor in the ever-increasing cost of living, which is in its turn the chief ground of prosperity among the business community. . . .") still has a telling bite. And the discussion, in Chapter 2, of the cumulative "state of the industrial arts" as one of the chief contributions to progress (as against the older emphasis, in classical economics, on land, labor and money capital as the coordinates of production) points up the increasing concern today with education, or "human capital," as the basic resource for technological and productive advance in society. The neglected point Veblen makes is that technology, the "state of the industrial arts," is a joint stock of knowledge derived from past experience—a social asset, which is no man's or no firm's individual property, although it is often claimed as such.

But his reiterated emphasis on technology also reveals the one-sidedness, or inadequacy, of the Veblenian system. He was indifferent to the social relations within the factory—both the elements that created bureaucracy and those that, as in the case of the engineers, made for insistence on professional status as one means of overcoming the impersonality that the rationalization of work imposes on modern life. In his concentration on the machinations of credit, Veblen slighted the imaginative social invention that is the "fiction" of credit. If one looks at the nature of capital accumulation in a historical perspective, credit, a nineteenth-century device, is a "due bill" on the future, an expression of faith (necessarily based on political stability) in the growth of an economy; through such a lien on the future, one is able to employ resources that normally would lie fallow. Credit, thus, as Schumpeter has pointed out, becomes the basis for entrepreneurial activity.

Veblen's proposal to do away with the price system reveals a naïve notion of planning—akin to Marx's idea that the interest rate is merely an exploitative device rather than an instrument to test the efficiency of capital—and has no place in a socialist economy. It is evident that direct physical planning of production (as in the experience of the American War Production Board during the Second World War or the Soviet system of a "mobilized economy") can rapidly increase the output of a *few* final products—regardless of cost—to an astonishing extent. But it is also equally evident that any complex planning mechanism seeking to distribute resources efficiently (that is, to assess relative costs) in the production of tens of thousands of *different* products can do so best, as even the socialist economies have discovered, only through a price system.

And, finally, the idea that revolution in the twentieth century can only be an "industrial overturn"—itself a syndicalist idea—underscores the "rationalist fallacy" that underlies so much of Veblen's thought. No matter how increasingly technical the underlying social processes become—and in the advanced industrial countries, with the rise of computer technology and its consequent effect on the labor force, this process is rapid indeed—social change at bottom is a *political* decision; or rather, the crucial turning points in a society are ultimately determined not by crescive social changes, but only as these come to a head in some

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political form. Thus, in the case of the United States, the Veblenian analysis, because it is essentially *apolitical,* neglects the role of government, or of the federal budget, as the crucial determinant of economic growth and social power. To generalize the concerns of a political sociology: in the advanced industrial, as well as in the newly industrializing, societies, it is the military and political forces that remain the "movers and shakers" of change.

In all this—in his evolutionary schemes, his emphasis on the economics of production, his savage critiques of commerce and money (as well as in his neglect of other forces)—Veblen betrays his true intellectual lineage, one that his involuted style was successfully able to obscure.* This ancestry is not Marxist (in an effort to assert his own originality one of the few forebears that Veblen attacks by name is Marx), but the utopian socialism of Fourier and Saint-Simon. The parallels with Fourier in Veblen's writing are astonishing. To show his contempt for the academic learning of his time, Fourier clothed the system he recapitulated endlessly in his various works in a set of neologisms that were deliberately meant to be incomprehensible to the laity. ("Fourier was conscious of the fact that he was pouring forth a torrent of newfangled words, and in his manuscripts he occasionally indulged in facetious self-mockery on this account. 'Hola, another neologism! Haro on the guilty one! but is this any worse than *doctrinaire?*' "†) Fourier's description of the earlier stages of society as *savagery* and *barbarism* were taken up by Veblen in *The Theory of the Leisure Class.* And Fourier's indictment of capitalism—the *locus classicus* of such criticism, as Professor Manuel points out—concentrates on the thievery in the stock market, the "corruption of commerce," the miseries of economic crises, hoarding and speculation and the squandering of natural resources as all being endemic to the system.

Perhaps the most binding link between Veblen and the French Utopians is their twofold view of society based on the preeminent virtue of production as the basic "good." For Fourier, as it was to be for Saint-Simon and, in his own way, for Veblen, those persons not directly connected with production—soldiers, bureaucrats, merchants and lawyers—were parasites who lived at the expense of the producers. (Veblen insisted that the elimination of salesmanship and all its voluminous apparatus and traffic would cut down the capitalized income of the business community by half.) And Saint-Simon, who constantly harped on the social waste, maladjustment and friction produced in a nonrational society, felt that a "natural elite" —in his view, the men of science—would come to the fore in the inevitable development of the industrial order.

The distinction between productive and unproductive labor, between industrial and pecuniary employments, runs as a peculiar thread through the writings of the Utopians, as it does through Veblen's, and reflects at bottom the hatred—and fear—felt by the artisan mentality toward metropolitan life, of the mechanist against the "play spirit." What Veblen disliked about capitalism, as T. W. Adorno has shrewdly pointed out, was not its exploitation of people but its waste of goods; and like Frederick W. Taylor he disliked every "superfluous" action. In the end, falling back on the "instinct of workmanship" as the basic virtue, Veblen

* "[Veblen's] usual failure to cite his sources in his writings would seem to have been due, to some extent, to a desire to seem original—a 'natural'—and to a slightly greater extent to a desire to evade another academic ritual, another debt, but, in addition, to some inner fear that a citation would act as a constraining force, limiting what he could say. Thus, for instance, if he should rest a particular statement about the handicraft era on Sombart's treatment of it, he would either have to put himself under obligation to Sombart's interpretation or to show why he departed from it, whereas by a rare, vague, and general reference he maintains his superiority to his sources. This practice, and many other elements in his makeup, led him to seek the doubtful security of abstraction—including an endlessly abstract and earnest call to other economists to be concrete. For abstraction allows one to glide over difficulties presented by individual instances. . . ." (David Riesman, *op. cit.*)

† Frank E. Manuel, *The Prophets of Paris,* Harvard University Press, 1962.

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the technocrat longed for the restoration of "the most ancient." It is the final irony, as Adorno points out,

> that in Veblen faith in Utopia necessarily takes the form which he so vigorously condemns in middle class society, the form of retrogression or "reversion." Hope, for him, lies solely with the primitive history of mankind. Every happiness barred to him because of the pressures of dreamless adjustment and adaptation to reality, to the conditions of the industrial world, shows him its image in some early golden age of mankind.

Central to all this—to return to our earlier theme of the new class—is the elitist image, which was given its most mechanical shape in the doctrines of technocracy. Most of Veblen's admirers have sought to discredit similarities, but the resemblance is clear, and while Veblen's doctrines cannot be held accountable for the later phase of technocracy—which flared again briefly in 1940 as a quasi-fascist movement, replete with gray uniforms and a monad symbol—the "elective affinity" between Veblenianism and technocracy is evident not only in the formal content of the ideas but in the temperamental derivatives: the qualities of inhuman scientism and formal rationalism, which in the end become an attack upon culture itself.

The central feature of contemporary life is bureaucracy—that vast cobweb of rules and procedures that lays down "rational" grades or levels of accomplishments and orderly prescriptions of conduct as the defined steps for rising or finding a place in the world. It is an age of the specialist, the expert and the technician. Karl Marx, in his metaphysical simplicity ("Man will be a hunter in the morning, a fisherman in the afternoon"), never envisaged that this would be the fate of the socialist dream.

Veblen, with his ironic military metaphors, had a more profound insight; for him the technicians constituted the indispensable general staff of the economic army, who one day, when the dawning consciousness of their power became clear to them, would presumably take over as the rulers of the new society. That the actual historical story, the literal contact with the engineers, is a myth is less important than Veblen's need to envision and proclaim such a myth as true.

In the coming decades, as any reading of changes in our occupational structure indicates, we will be moving toward a "post-industrial society," in which the scientist, the engineer and the technician constitute the key functional class in society. The question remains whether Veblen, in envisaging such a change—which is the striking portent of *The Engineers and the Price System*—had finally abandoned the cautions that had made him the "outsider" all his life, and had placed himself at the head of this wave of the future, saying, in effect, that the technological rule of society was good, or whether, in some final, mordant irony, in seeing such a society as the mechanized end product of the "instinct of workmanship," he was playing a joke—and on whom?

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The Revolving Bookstand . . . . . .

Ehrengard and Isak Dinesen

ROBERT LANGBAUM

The novella *Ehrengard** is the last story that the Danish writer, Karen Blixen, whom English-speaking readers know as Isak Dinesen, completed to her satisfaction before her death last September. The story makes a triumphant conclusion to her work. For Isak Dinesen's vision always was essentially comic and pastoral, and *Ehrengard* is the lightest, the most purely comic and pastoral story she ever wrote. It is not as profound or emotionally rich as some of her other stories, but it is unsurpassed for sheer loveliness. *Ehrengard* is a story of complete fulfillment, complete reconciliation between heaven and earth.

As with almost all her work, Isak Dinesen wrote *Ehrengard* in English. She would, in accordance with her usual practice, have gone on to translate it into Danish; but this time, unfortunately, the Danish translation had to be done for her. *Ehrengard* takes off from the novel, "Diary of the Seducer," with which Søren Kierkegaard concludes his account of the aesthetic life in *Either/Or*. Isak Dinesen actually proposed Kierkegaard's title for her story, when the *Ladies' Home Journal* suggested a change in title for its abbreviated version, which came out in December 1962 as "The Secret of Rosenbad." Kierkegaard's seducer is an aesthete whose interest is in the way the seduction is managed. He wants to possess not so much the girl's body as her imagination—to awaken in her the idea of the erotic so that her "only desire is to give herself freely." Only in this, he says, is there "true enjoyment, but this always requires spiritual influence."

The passage is the germ of *Ehrengard*. Yet *Ehrengard* is an answer to Kierkegaard, in that Isak Dinesen accepts Kierkegaard's analysis of the aesthetic life but not his evaluation of it. Kierkegaard apparently wants us to consider the seducer a scoundrel or at least to see the aesthetic life as a dead end. But Isak Dinesen sees in the seducer's desire to bring the girl to fulfillment —to bring her womanhood to birth, in Kierkegaard's metaphor—an emblem of the artist's desire at just the point where it meets with God's. Far from being a dead end then, the aesthetic life is for Isak Dinesen continuous with that spiritual or religious life that Kierkegaard is at such pains to distinguish from it.

Her point requires, however, that the seduction be given a different setting than the squalidly bourgeois world of Kierkegaard's novel, in which there are none of the symbols that help us see the erotic principle in its ideal aspect. She requires a setting like Kierkegaard's in his essay on the erotic principle in Mozart's *Don Giovanni*—a setting made and defined by art. Thus, she sets her story in a storybook world; divides it like a musical composition into a prelude, a pastorale and a rondo; makes her seducer a painter; and uses, as one of the symbols that awaken the girl to the erotic idea, a statue of Leda and the swan.

Ehrengard takes place in the storybook world of the little German principalities—in a Grand Duchy that has the charmingly

* *Random House. $3.95.*

ROBERT LANGBAUM is professor of English at the University of Virginia and author of *The Poetry of Experience*. This essay is from his forthcoming book, *The Gayety of Vision: A Study of Isak Dinesen's Art.*

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nonsensical name of Babenhausen. Although the story takes place only one hundred and twenty years ago, the world of the little principalities seems far more remote than that. Isak Dinesen connects it with the world of fairy tale. We have the story from an old lady who knows it from the letters that the famous painter and Don Juan of his time, Wolfgang Cazotte, wrote to her great-grandmother, Countess von Gassner. The events originally took place, we are told, amid a throng of details we would recognize as realistic; but these details having been lost, the implication is that the events have come down to us as story.

They follow therefore a mythical pattern in that the Grand Duke and Grand Duchess of Babenhausen, having grieved a long time because they were childless, are finally vouchsafed a perfect son of ethereal beauty and aloofness. The Grand Duchess in fact worries because Prince Lothar, when he reaches marriageable age, shows no susceptibility to that *belle passion* that is necessary to the perpetuation of the house of Fugger-Babenhausen and the foiling of the dynasty's wicked lateral branch. In the hope of awakening her son to the erotic idea, the Grand Duchess encourages his friendship with Cazotte who happens to be painting her portrait at the time. She is not disappointed. After a visit with Cazotte to the court of Leuchtenstein, Prince Lothar announces his desire to marry the beautiful Princess Ludmilla. Cazotte's influence went a little further than the Grand Duchess had planned, however; for sometime after the happy nuptials, Prince Lothar informed his mother "that the Ducal heir, on whom her mind and heart had for so long been concentrating, was about to make his entry in the world a full two months before law and decency permitted."

Although struck dumb by the news, the Grand Duchess makes up her mind to side with her son and to keep the matter from her husband. Far from chiding Cazotte, she calls upon him for help. It is a sign, as is his confidential relation with the narrator's great-grandmother, that married women and artists are leagued together in the service of Eros. "Madame," says Cazotte, "the Lord God, that great artist, at times paints his pictures in such a manner as to be best appreciated at a long distance. A hundred and fifty years hence your present predicament will have all the look of an idyll composed to delight its spectators." We are reminded of the connection between memory and art. And Cazotte extends the connection to include instinct and the ideal, when he advises the Grand Duchess to turn the predicament, here and now, into the idyll she instinctively knows it to be. The Grand Duchess is pleasantly rejuvenated by her participation in the intrigue that follows.

The Prince and Princess, together with a small trustworthy court, are—according to Cazotte's plan—to retire in April to a secluded residence in the country, where the baby will be born in May. For two months the small court will form "a stone wall of loyal hearts round an exalted secret." Then in July a cannonade will announce the birth of the child. There will be a great baptism ("it was a lucky thing that the old Archbishop was extremely short-sighted"), after which the princely couple will retire to their regular summer residence. "About the end of September the proud Babenhauseners would be pluming themselves on their lusty and clever little Prince." The idyll will take place during those spring months when a circle of secrecy will protect the erotic miracle from Christian and conventional judgments. It will take place during the two months when the baby will be entirely justified as a child of love, without additional sanction of law or baptism. Cazotte chooses for the place of seclusion the chateau of Rosenbad, a charming rococo hermitage which he decorates as a rococo Venusberg in order that the baby, when it is born, will turn out to be an amorino, a chubby little Cupid in the rococo style. That is what happens. Cazotte creates a softly elegant idyll, devoted to the beauty of women and children.

It is important to find the right maid-of-honor for the Princess during her seclusion, and Cazotte names for this post the daughter of General von Schreckenstein—Ehrengard. "A young Walkyrie," Cazotte calls her.

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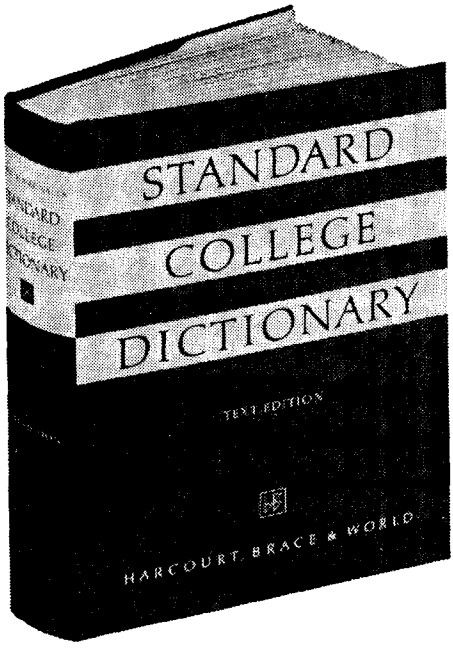

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"Brought up in the sternest military virtues, in the vast and grim castle of Schreckenstein, the only daughter of a warrior clan. An almost unbelievably fitting white-hot young angel with a flaming sword to stand sentinel before our young lovers' paradise!" She is of course the most inappropriate possible choice for so voluptuous a place. That is as much of the joke as we get in the "prelude."

The joke goes further when we learn in the "pastorale" that Cazotte has been planning to seduce Ehrengard, that the first time he saw her he cried with Michelangelo: "'My greatest triumph hides within that block of marble.'" Cazotte may even have arranged the whole idyll as a setting for this seduction. The possibility parodies the extravagant measures taken by Kierkegaard's seducer to accomplish his purpose. We learn of Cazotte's intention through his letters to the narrator's great-grandmother. These letters contain the reflections that are the whole substance of Kierkegaard's novel and that show our seducers as interested in reflection rather than existence. Isak Dinesen uses the letters superbly as a lyrical accompaniment to the action, an accompaniment in which she turns Kierkegaard's turbulent poetry and wit into her own serene combination of the two.

Cazotte does not even want the single act of physical consummation required by Kierkegaard's seducer as a token of success. He wants only to bring forth the hidden flower of Ehrengard's being. After asking in a letter where this flower might "give forth itself most exhaustively," he himself answers: "In the blush." The answer completes his image of Ehrengard as a block of marble. He will not only bring forth the statue, he will bring it to life. "You will not, I know, for a moment," he writes,

> be thinking of the blush of offended modesty which might be called forth, from the outside, by a coarse and blunt assailant. . . . To the mind of the artist the very idea is blasphemy. . . . You will no more be thinking of the blush of anger, the which, from the outside, I myself—preserve me—might bring about. . . . Events from outside will, by law of nature, come to Ehrengard and will mean nothing at all to her. She will marry—and I do not envy the man who is to enter into relationship with the Schreckensteins, personally I should prefer to enter their dungeon—she will bear ten soldier sons, and it will mean nothing at all to her. What is really to happen to this admirable, this unique nature is to happen within herself. So I shall in time be drawing my young Amazon's blood . . . from the deepest, most secret and sacred wells of her being, making it cover her all over like a transparent crimson veil and making it burn her up in one single exquisite gasp of flame.

This is Isak Dinesen's erotic and spiritual intensification of Kierkegaard's: "There are different kinds of feminine blushes. There is the coarse brick-red blush which romantic writers always use so freely when they let their heroines blush all over. There is the delicate blush; it is the blush of the spirit's dawn. In a young girl it is priceless." Isak Dinesen goes on in this letter to connect the blush with the inner fire, the force of desire, that animates and spiritualizes all nature.

> In high mountains, as you will know, there exists a phenomenon of nature called *Alpen-Glühen*. . . . After the sun has set, and as the whole majestic mountain landscape is already withdrawing into itself, suddenly the row of summits, all on their own radiate a divine fire, a celestial, deep rose flame, as if they were giving up a long kept secret. After that they disappear, nothing more dramatic can be imagined: they have betrayed their inmost substance and can now only annihilate themselves. Black night follows.
>
> Tall white-clad mountains will naturally be a little slow in the uptake, but when at last they do realize and conceive, what glow, you heavens, and what glorification. And what void afterwards. I have seen the *Alpen-Glühen* once, the moment is among the greatest of my existence. . . . And yet after all it has been but a presage of my adventure with Ehrengard.

Isak Dinesen adds to Kierkegaard's "spirit's dawn" the image of night and annihilation. The more coldly virginal the girl is, the more complete is her awakening to passion and her annihilation as a virgin.

The addition fits the myths of Ehrengard's archetype, the maiden-goddess—the myth of Persephone, for example, whose maidenhood comes to flower in the story of her rape. There is the most delicate exploi-

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tation here of the two related cycles of myths treated by Jung and Kerényi in their book on the Divine Child and the Kore or Divine Maiden. Eros or Cupid is one manifestation of the Divine Child, and the erotic mystery of virginity is expressed in the union of the Divine Maiden with the Divine Mother —Demeter and Persephone are aspects of a single figure.

The baby—says Kerényi in connection with "the Primordial Child whose home is the primal water, and the best known of whose many names is 'Eros' "—reminds us of the love that begot him. It is the birth of the Princess's baby that first awakens in Ehrengard the erotic idea. She does not know, Cazotte writes, that she has fallen "in love with the God of Love himself . . . the first step towards a deeper, final fall."

Kerényi connects the maiden-goddess with water; and sure enough, one very early July morning, Cazotte comes upon Ehrengard bathing nude in a lake, assisted only by her maid. He receives the vision gravely, for he has been proven right in his valuation of the girl's beauty and has been granted a motif for a painting—"Nymph bathing in a forest lake" or "The bath of Diana"—which will be the crowning glory of his career. An artist possesses his beloved by painting her, says Kierkegaard's seducer: "I do this, too, but in a spiritual sense. She does not know that I possess this picture, and therein lies my real deception."

Cazotte plans to seduce Ehrengard by secretly painting her at her early morning baths. He imagines the scene in which the painting is unveiled to the world, and "no one but he and she"—the bather's face being turned away—"would know the truth. . . . She would be, in the midst of the brilliant crowd, alone with him." They would be bound together by that erotic idea of the secret, that Isak Dinesen takes from Kierkegaard; and Cazotte imagines how under her clothes Ehrengard's body "would slowly become all aglow." This is the moment when he would possess her. She would see herself in the picture as beautiful and naked, and this self-consciousness would constitute her fall.

He paints her every morning for a week, until one morning she disappears suddenly after a short cry from her maid. He fears he has been apprehended and that there will be no more baths of Diana. But later in the day, the Princess comes unwittingly to his aid by asking him to admire the little Prince in company with Ehrengard. "Surely you will be needing a model for an amorino in a scene of love," says the Princess when he enters her pale-blue boudoir. "I lend him to you for the purpose." The boudoir is atwitter like an aviary with court ladies, the Princess is in a pretty white negligée; the scene is a charmingly rococo adoration of the child.

The Princess bids Ehrengard lift up, for Cazotte's inspection, the basket full of white stocks in which the baby has been laid. Cazotte and Ehrengard stand a minute "quite still, his face like hers bowed over the fairy cradle." The scent of stocks, "an invisible cloud of Venusberg incense, encompassed their two heads." "Oh Ehrengard," says the Princess, "how I do wish that Prince Lothar and I had been even more thoughtless than we have, and that we had got a month more at Rosenbad." The remark is shockingly immoral, but it reveals perfectly the meaning of pastoral. For within the charmed circle of Rosenbad, love needs no other justification than itself and leads only to happiness. The Princess fears the day, which is now approaching, when the charm will be broken, when the baby's birth will be announced and the child of love will be lost in the child of law.

Cazotte and Ehrengard stop afterward before the fountain out of whose clear water rises the statue of Leda and the swan. "My maid tells me," she says, "that you want to paint a picture. Out by the east of the house. I wish to tell you that I shall be there every morning, at six o'clock." Cazotte's response is expressed in a one-sentence letter: "The damnable, the dynamic, the demonic loyalty of this girl!" This is not the seduction as he imagined it; nor would it be, under these terms, a seduction at all. Besides, the force that brought Ehrengard to this point is not the one he had in mind. It is the force of feudal loyalty. He had counted on it when he chose her

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for the post at Rosenbad. For although Ehrengard had been brought up with the strictest moral principles, he knew that "inasmuch as the one fundamental law of her own nature" was loyalty to the house of Fugger-Babenhausen, Ehrengard would find the reversal at Rosenbad of the usual rules perfectly "legal and logical." He did not, however, expect that she would accede to him because as a good courtier she had adopted the conventions established by the Princess.

As always happens when someone in Isak Dinesen tries to play the artist in life, the chain of events set in motion by Cazotte has now got out of hand. Ehrengard will fulfill herself, but through adherence to her own feudal and Walkyrie nature. By achieving an apotheosis of virginity as a warrior-maiden, she comes alive erotically and proves Cazotte to have been right about her in a way he hadn't expected. This is both a charming jest and a sublime tribute to the erotic fire hidden in virginity. Ehrengard is Miss Nat-og-Dag, Athena Hopballehus, Lady Flora—all Isak Dinesen's fierce, highborn and potentially passionate virgins, brought finally to perfect fulfillment.

So far Ehrengard has, like Kierkegaard's girl, existed only in the reflections of the seducer. Kierkegaard's girl is a mere shadow; but it is amazing how vivid Ehrengard is, although we know nothing more about her than that she is a highborn chivalric virgin. When in the "rondo," she steps forward as the heroine of a feudal romance to which Cazotte is merely a spectator, she grows in stature by surprising us, as she surprises Cazotte, into a deeper understanding of what we already know about her. We remember of this story the quality of Cazotte's mind, but we *see* the image of Ehrengard as a stance straighter and nobler than that of the other characters. Here again as elsewhere in her work, Isak Dinesen shows how we have to revise current notions of what constitutes successful character-making in fiction.

In the "rondo," the husband of the little Prince's wet nurse complains at the local inn of his wife's defection to Rosenbad. Suspecting some secret at Rosenbad, agents of the dynasty's wicked lateral branch have been in the vicinity, and they now overhear the young peasant. They bribe him to kidnap his wife with her mysterious charge. The peasant lures his wife with the baby into his cart and takes them on a mad gallop to the inn. Rosenbad is in despair, the baby's birth is to be announced the very next day. Cazotte orders his gig for the rescue. But Ehrengard, who is in her riding habit, decides she can travel faster on her fiery black steed, Wotan, which she has had sent to her from Schreckenstein. Cazotte does not try to stop her, for he has reason to believe that the baby will be found at the inn and expects his knowledge to give him the advantage over her speed. He imagines a charming scene in which he regains the initiative lost at the Leda fountain by presenting the regained baby to Ehrengard to hand over to the Princess. "Would the girl not feel then for a vertiginous moment this particular amorino to be, spiritually and emotionally, her own child—and his!"

So indignant with the kidnappers that she beats her mount with her riding whip, Ehrengard is happy; for she is at last playing out her Walkyrie nature—"it was as if for a long time she had yearned to be angry." With "the hunting instincts of her breed," she has only to question a few people on the road to "run the fugitives to earth" at the inn. To the guilty peasant she looks, as she bursts into their room, like "a young destroying angel." It is a sign of her feudal instincts that she never doubts the nurse's loyalty, but in regard to the man "the old feudal consciousness of the right to punish seized and held the daughter of the Schreckensteins." She grips the man by his long hair and knocks his head against the wall three times. Pastoral still, the episode is a mock-heroic recapitulation of a feudal motif. The chase is a merry rustic chase through a beautiful landscape, the inn is picturesque; the punishment clownish; and Ehrengard is touchingly feminine in her masculinity.

Ehrengard is engaged to a cousin, Kurt von Blittersdorff; since they grew up together, the erotic idea has not yet awak-

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ened between them. Cazotte plans to use the engagement as Kierkgaard's seducer uses the engagement of his girl—to make Ehrengard aware of the erotic idea by contrast to the merely social convention of engagement. When the Princess asks Ehrengard if she has ever kissed Kurt, Ehrengard says they kissed many times as children. "Try to have a secret with him," says the Princess, suggesting that there is as yet no erotic bond between them. Now it so happens—as it should happen in comedy—that Kurt, who is an Army officer, has been on maneuvers in the area and is now celebrating downstairs with his fellow officers. Hearing the peasant's screams upstairs, he rushes into the room where Ehrengard is knocking the man's head against the wall. There follows a most amusing little recognition scene.

Sensing the point of vulnerability in his two female antagonists, the peasant says, in pleading his case before the officer, "Let them tell you whose child it is." At this point Cazotte enters (the scene is staged as in a theater so that the three swiftly successive entrances are increasingly funny). He takes his place quietly on the bed, like the spectator at a drama who understands that "none of the *dramatis personae* took any interest whatever in him." Ehrengard has a stage and an audience for her apotheosis. "It is my child," she announces. She says Kurt must promise to leave her forever; "for it is my child. . . . You will have to believe me," she says. "I have never in my life lied to you."

This first time she lies to Kurt is the moment of her fall and the apotheosis of her feudal loyalty. She sacrifices everything, her reputation for virginity and her engagement, to protect her sovereign's secret. Now that she has fallen and broken their engagement, the erotic idea awakens in Kurt: "How was it . . . that until this hour he had not known that she was the most lovely thing on earth, and the one thing necessary to his happiness?" The erotic idea awakens in her, too. "She too felt, in a new way, the depth of life. There was a sweetness in it which till now she had never known of, there was a terrible sadness as well. She would never have believed, had anybody told her, that to meet and to part with Kurt von Blittersdorff could mean so much." The erotic idea is connected with the idea of loss and mortality.

Kurt advances the intimacy by asking, "Who is the father of the child?" With that question, "the other people in the room sank through the floor, he and she were alone as on a mountain peak." To ask that question of the woman you love is to ask who was there in place of me; it is to participate vicariously in the act of begetting the child. "It will be, Ehrengard," Kurt says as though they were alone, "a secret between you and me, a thing which, in the whole world, only you and I know of." The secret is like the child a sign of the erotic bond between them. But it is, as in "The Ring" (*Anecdotes of Destiny*) and as in "Converse at Night in Copenhagen" and "The Cloak" stories (*Last Tales*), a bond between the woman and two men.

Ehrengard points at Cazotte, lifting her arm "like a young officer at his baptism of fire indicating to his men the entrenchment to be taken." (The image maintains the comedy at the poetic climax.) "It is he," she says. "Herr Cazotte is the father of my child." She is right. Cazotte has, like the Holy Ghost, impregnated her with the erotic idea that materialized in the baby. Because she has in a psychological sense deceived Kurt, she breaks their engagement; but in doing so, she assimilates Kurt to Cazotte's role and falls in love with him.

The Princess has indeed lent out her baby to be an amorino in a love scene. But it is not the scene Cazotte planned. For Ehrengard has once more turned the tables on him. She has handed him the baby that he planned to hand her. So it is he, consequently, who blushes.

> At these words Herr Cazotte's blood was drawn upwards, as from the profoundest wells of his being, till it colored him all over like a transparent crimson veil. His brow and cheeks, all on their own, radiated a divine fire, a celestial, deep rose flame, as if they were giving away a long kept secret.

The secret is his desire to be not only a spiritual seducer but the father of Ehrengard's baby.

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In Kierkegaard's novel, it is after the girl has broken her engagement first to the other man, and then to the seducer himself, that she is ready to give herself to the seducer. Ehrengard, after breaking her engagement, names her spiritual seducer as a step toward offering herself to Kurt for consummation. Cazotte had planned for Kurt to be the "spiritual cuckold" who would have external possession of Ehrengard while he himself had internal possession. But in naming her spiritual seducer, Ehrengard exorcises him and prepares the way for a union with Kurt of body and soul. By exorcising what we may understand to be a combination of father image and disembodied ideal, Ehrengard is enabled to love a mortal man. She can therefore step out of the realm of reflection, where Kierkegaard's lovers remain, into the realm of existence. She goes further even than the lady in "The Ring," who pays for existence the price of tragic ambiguity. Ehrengard gets heaven on earth.

The Prince and Princess make the necessary explanations to Kurt; and the betrothed couple attend the baptism of "the new-born Prince" (his second birth parallels the second birth of their engagement), at which Ehrengard wears an Order given to noble ladies for service to the house of Fugger-Babenhausen. Cazotte, who is left in the frustration he planned for Ehrengard, retires to Rome from whence we learn that he has given up spiritual seductions for the orthodox kind. In making the girl turn the tables on her seducer, Isak Dinesen wittily rebukes Kierkegaard and the other men who write tales of seduction in which the woman is a mere passive victim. She bears out Cazotte's remark in his first letter that "to be seduced is the privilege of woman, the which man may well envy her"; and she shows how, in preparing Ehrengard for so perfect a marriage, Cazotte wrought better than he knew. As an artist, Cazotte has been successful; but as an artist, he could not expect to achieve consummation in life as well.

The feudal motif shows the way through the dead end to which Kierkegaard brings the aesthetic life. Kierkegaard sets his aesthetic seduction in a bourgeois world without pattern. But to win your way to existence you must step, Isak Dinesen suggests, from a reflective or artistic pattern to a pattern in life. The old aristocratic order offers such a pattern in life, which, since it is based on memory, connects with art, desire and spirit. The old aristocratic order shows how—in life as in a story—"action" can be the counterpart of "idea" and the hero can be the counterpart of the artist. Isak Dinesen seems to be saying of Kierkegaard that he has, in driving a wedge between the aesthetic and the religious life, overlooked the connection of spirit with the force of desire and memory that makes nature continuous with art and civilization. This connection is the subject of all Isak Dinesen's work.

Isak Dinesen offers through this connection an answer to the split, bequeathed us by the Enlightenment, between fact and value. She accounts for the split by reminding us that if our pre-Enlightenment ancestors saw in people immortality where we see only mortality, it is because they were talking about a different order of person than we have in mind. They were talking about a self that is as much outside us as inside—a self that emerges, like smaller Chinese boxes out of larger, from social roles that themselves emerge from archetypal identities. They were talking about a self that draws on enduring powers outside the individual body.

Like other writers of our time, Isak Dinesen has used the modern idea of the unconscious to dissolve the rigid outlines of the self bequeathed us by the Enlightenment. We hear a great deal nowadays about the loss of the self. But the self that has been lost is the autonomous and magically potent self that the nineteenth-century romanticists identified as the one remaining source of value in a world where value was no longer objective. Such high claims for the self could not be long sustained, however, because the self the nineteenth-century romanticists had in mind was still the locked-up self that they had inherited from the Enlightenment. Isak Dinesen salvages the romantic idea of the self by showing

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that the self is not simply autonomous, but that it emerges—through the connection of consciousness with living, and even with nonliving, unconsciousness—from social roles and archetypal identities that themselves emerge from internal instincts that have their external origin in those earliest tremors of earthly life that were themselves transformations of sunlight, air and water.

Isak Dinesen has devised a way of projecting at once all these phases of the self and the different orders of judgment that may appropriately be turned on each. She shows that when all phases of the self are operative, then the self must be judged as, like nature, innocent. But she also shows—and this is what makes her, along with Yeats, Mann, Joyce and Eliot, distinctively twentieth-century—that it is through symbols that all phases of the self are made operative. By enabling us to recognize other phases of the self in ourselves and others, symbols enable us to pass from one phase of the self to the other and thus achieve fulfillment.

That is what happens to Ehrengard, who moves from feudal to erotic symbols to combine the two "ideas" in a heroic "action" that shows her what she desires and who she is. Ehrengard can do this because Rosenbad is, in its architecture, décor, gardens and statuary, the house of Europe. As maker of the story through which she moves, Cazotte has made available to her the community of symbols we call our culture. He has brought her to fulfillment by making it possible for her to pass from his mind into an external reality that is the mind of Europe and, beyond that, the mind of God. We fulfill ourselves by a movement analagous to the structure of Isak Dinesen's stories. We step into ever intenser realities, which is to say into an ever larger mind that is both inside us and outside.

This is Isak Dinesen's answer to the question raised by the theme of vicariousness that runs through all her work, starting with the story of the sexually impotent, but imaginatively potent, Prince Potenziani in "Roads Round Pisa" (*Seven Gothic Tales*). The question, bequeathed us by the Enlightenment, is whether values exist only in the mind or are really out there. Her answer is (and she is saying in her terms what other writers of our time say in theirs) that to the extent that life is like a story—to the extent that it makes us fulfill ourselves in ways we did not consciously intend—we are living at the point where our desires meet with external forces. And at that point, inside and outside are two aspects, forever exchanging places, of the same reality. To the extent, in other words, that life is like a story in having any value at all, there could be no value inside if there were none outside, and vice versa.

It is remarkable, in an age that is on the surface growing ever more chaotic, how many writers are quietly reorganizing our idea of the world by reorganizing our idea of the self. I say quietly, because we have been so absorbed by the negative things our modern writers have been saying, that we have hardly caught up as yet with what they have been telling us in a positive way. If, as Isak Dinesen tells us in *Out of Africa*, the white race has since the Industrial Revolution taken a path that separates it from the rest of the world and from the past, then the work of Freud and Jung is leading us, through its implications, back to union with at least the past (since the rest of the world is now following in our tracks). We are being led back, I think, to a mood of acceptance like the old tragic fatalism; but an acceptance which, because it will be based on knowledge rather than ignorance, should result not in the fear in which the world was anciently bound, but in confidence. The lessons of our modern writers, when we have learned them, cannot help affecting our view of the world; and Isak Dinesen's stories suggest what that view may be. They suggest that science, when it has finally been understood, when it has been absorbed into our culture and turned back into the poetry from which it originally sprang, will lead to a comic view of life and will manifest itself in an art that will be, in its final effect, comic.

Isak Dinesen recapitulates in her stories —in the evolution of Lady Flora after she kisses the statue ("The Cardinal's Third Tale," *Last Tales*), in the evolving aspects

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of Babette's dinner and in the evolution of Babette herself into a marble monument ("Babette's Feast," *Anecdotes of Destiny*), in the evolution of a cynical story like *Ehrengard* into a pastoral comedy—the change in European perceptions of reality during the last three or four centuries. By imposing upon each other, in the same story, at least three different judgments of the same events, she shows how we lost unity of perception and how we may regain it. For when we look at life with single vision, with the one analytic eye that cuts facts off from value, then life is meaningless and depressing. When we look at it with both eyes, with the understanding and sympathy that enables us to project ourselves into events and other people, then life is beautiful and sad. But when, using more than our eyes, using also the resources of cultural and biological memory, we look through life, seeing it in a transforming vision that collapses the single person and event into a pattern of recurrence and our highest aspiration into our most primitive instinct, then we see how every part of life is necessary, how we could not have what we call the highest without what we call the lowest. Then we see life as the storyteller does, as we may imagine God does. We see it as beautiful and sad—and gay.

A Call for Inventiveness

BLUEPRINTS FOR LEVIATHAN: American Style. *By Roy F. Nichols. Atheneum. $6.50.*

Reviewed by HERMAN FINER

Perhaps the most striking characteristic of American historiography is the brevity of American history and the unprecedented profusion of its historians. Hence, it is always a question whether an American historian can find anything new to say about his subject, for the materials have already been exhumed and examined many times, while the possibility of substantial discoveries of new data is rather remote.

What, then, can we hope that the historian can contribute to an oft-told story? He can produce an unusual outlook; pose a fresh question; and, from his own personality, bring forth and inject into his readers an original problem-setting attitude.

Provost Roy F. Nichols has performed this feat excellently. His *Blueprints for Leviathan* is dedicated to a patient, tenacious and cogent reexamination of the development of the Republic that focuses on the *inventiveness* and ingenuity of American political leaders from colonial times to beyond the dreadful divide of the Civil War. Clearly the federal system, the Presidency, the Congress, and their respective powers and responsibilities, did not come into the world by accident. Each word had to be chosen, each had to be linked with other ideas, the whole pattern had to be composed, down even to the deliberate strategic omission of punctuation marks, to persuade multitudes of restive and strong-willed men into a consensus on the legitimacy and righteousness of the polity that was to command them to good behavior day after day.

His study is replete with the terms that symbolize his deep concern for the political inventive process: blueprints, engines, apparatus, mechanism, specifications, documents. He has rendered to historians and political scientists and citizens in general a marked service in compelling our attention to the need of political inventiveness (not drift) today and in the future, in our exceedingly passion-saturated America. It can be no accident that this call for inventiveness culminates in Provost Nichols' contemplation of the failure of the Republic to solve the problem of slavery except by the war of 1861, and that it is published at a moment of ominous desperation about the very same issue, a hundred years after the Thirteenth, Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments.

The Leviathan is, of course, Thomas Hobbes's term for the State, the "Artificiall Man," the constitutional machinery of procedures that make of millions of diverse

HERMAN FINER is the author of *America's Destiny* and *Theory and Practice of Modern Government*. He is professor of political science at the University of Chicago.

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men and women the Body Politic. And here it might have been well to stress, just a trifle more emphatically, the spirit that informs it, the public philosophy or the admission of an order of values in our common life. It is difficult for those (in our time, especially the physical scientists) who are not professional students of the body politic to realize with comprehension and vividness what it has cost countless men over hundreds of generations to develop the fabric and spirit of the laws, the order that permits and protects freedom. As one scans the American Leviathan through Provost Nichols' microscope and incisive mind, and sees its reticulated national government, its fifty states, its multifarious cities, its thousands of volumes of jurisprudence concerning rights and duties, its innumerable statutes, rules and orders, its capacious records of debate, the fabric takes on the appearance of a miraculous creation, far more magnificent than a hundred Chartres: each step is a triumph of the human intellect and at once a release and a control of mass emotions and appetites.

With characteristic wisdom, the author has not begun with 1776, as some do who seem to think that there was no history before that date. He traces the mental and spiritual travail in governmental inventiveness from England's experience around the Norman Conquest. He exhibits, causally, the process of ingenuity, through Magna Carta, the charters that followed and expanded and guaranteed the earlier rights and duties, and the instruments that shaped the parliament and executive, and the cities, and the trading and exploring companies, especially those companies that came to settle and colonize America. He shows the truth of Figgis' classic comment, when he treats of the adaptation of the polity to the Protestant Revolt: "Liberty is the residuary legatee of ecclesiastical animosities." He discerns the practical political sense in the rise of lobbies, committees, caucuses and parties, side by side with the evolution of John Locke's doctrine of the social contract. He demonstrates the American ability to adapt the saving democratic tradition to the New World, its different societies in North and South, its readaptation to the lands of the far south and west after the Louisiana Purchase and the Texan War, *et cetera*. An ominous theme enters with the inclusion in the American Leviathan of peoples not homogeneous in ethnic birth or tradition, a theme continued peacefully until 1861, when the slavery of the Negro population broke the Leviathan in two. It is well to remember that these were the years when the white slaves in Russia were emancipated; it is well to remember, too, that in Western Europe they had been emancipated after 1815, if not before. The spirit of liberty and equality cannot, in an age of communication, be confined to certain places only.

The principal crisis, to which Provost Nichols devotes several remarkably engaging chapters, is the failure of the American Leviathan in the Civil War. It is a merit of this book that it has no cut-and-dried answer to the question who or what was to blame: many men, many interests, many places, many factors. "When the historian applies the dry scientific concepts of the behavioral sciences to an analysis of this war, it becomes difficult to assign praise or blame or to award victory or defeat." For the explosives of human passion lay roundabout, and John Brown's violence set them in eruption. The result of the growth of North and South and the peculiarities of the West had been to produce "Two patriotisms in one *patria*." The arrangement by which the succession to the position of Chief Executive came every four years, with all the deliberate arousing of popular passions, was not helpful. Lincoln, Provost Nichols believes, had not at that moment matured his political skills or was otherwise engaged in politics and patronage, and so could not perform the superhuman task of avoiding bloodshed. The analysis of the interweavings and enmities, between interests, ideals, geographical demands, ignorance and sophistication, that produced fratricide is fascinating, as is also the constructiveness evinced in the ingenuities of renewal in the Thirteenth, Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments, which made white men free as well as black. So, America was

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equipped to face the new demands upon her polity that surged in from the 1870's onward.

There is a note of bereavement in the author's comment: the promise of the Emancipation was far from fulfilled even a hundred years beyond the war! There is a note of apprehension as the book draws to its close: "Is the Republic in the throes of constructing, quite unconsciously perhaps, a new Leviathan, which no one has yet described?" It would have to take care of international insecurity, the welfare state, the new conservatism, social conformity, racial antagonism, the secrets of genetic science, the energy in the atom, the space on whose edge we are poised. "Is the human intellectual power as at present developed equal to the challenge?"

The work is evocative of great themes, lucidly and elegantly expressed. I wonder whether the behavioral sciences are anywhere close to being helpful? I wonder whether the visceral is not too strong for the cerebral? We are in need of returning to man's long record of political ingenuity, to Greece and Rome, to Western Europe since Charlemagne, and all the way down through Provost Nichols' territory, to its deep and precious pondering.

The Classics of Realism

THE GATES OF HORN: A Study of Five French Realists. *By Harry Levin. Oxford University Press. $8.50.*

Reviewed by JOHN UPDIKE

Among the formulae of faint praise, none is more galling, and in a sense more futile, than the assertion that a book has the faults of its virtues. Yet Professor Levin's massive and intensely meditated critical study does seem to me limited by the very elegance, balance and scholarly scrupulosity that make it, within limits, wonderful. *The Gates of Horn,* the product of twenty-five years' intermittent labor, is concerned, at its narrowest, with the novels of Stendhal, Balzac, Flaubert, Zola and Proust. More broadly, it surveys, through the windows of nineteenth-century French fiction, the social history of France itself. And its broadest subject, announced in the first sentence, is "the relation between literature and life." As the exposition advances outward through these spheres from the specific to the general, its encyclopedic apparatus of quotation, allusion and paraphrase explodes into a kind of wildly detailed vagueness. Nowhere, in these half-thousand dense pages, is there any statement about the relation between art and reality as incisive and memorable as, say, T. E. Hulme's famous metaphor of the architect's curves:

> You know what I call architect's curves—flat pieces of wood with all different kinds of curvature. By a suitable selection from these you can draw approximately any curve you like. The artist I take to be the man who simply can't bear the idea of that "approximately." He will get the exact curve of what he sees whether it be an object or an idea in the mind. . . . Suppose that instead of your curved pieces of wood you have a springy piece of steel of the same types of curvature as the wood. Now the state of tension or concentration of mind, if he is doing anything really good in this struggle against the ingrained habit of the technique, may be represented by a man employing all his fingers to bend the steel out of its own curve and into the exact curve which you want.

Ungrammatical, undocumented and dogmatic, Hulme hits the mark. Professor Levin, with his eye on the same target ("the movement of realism, technically considered, is an endeavor to emancipate literature from the sway of conventions") eschews the intuitive rifle in favor of the scholarly shotgun. Having mentioned Stendhal's crucial definition of the novel as "a mirror riding along a highway," he not quite relevantly busies himself with a brisk survey of the mirror/art image from Plato, through Cicero and Shakespeare, to Wilde and Joyce. The reader too frequently overhears the rustle of index cards. At times the exposition takes on the texture of a *Saturday Review* literary quiz:

✪ JOHN UPDIKE's second collection of poems, *Telephone Poles,* was published in September. His novel, *The Centaur,* appeared earlier this year.

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By reducing power politics to a Lilliputian scale, by observing the strict protocol of comic opera, Stendhal secures for Parma the hegemony among imaginary kingdoms—Nephelococcygia, Illyria, Gerolstein, Erewhon, Ruritania, Zembla, Poictesme, and the various islands and territories of Cockaigne.

(Ten points for each imaginary kingdom identified by work and author, with a bonus ten for pouncing on "Zembla," still warm from last year's Nabokov novel.)

While Professor Levin's allusiveness is occasionally trivial[1] and his prose overburnished,[2] he compresses worlds of reading into virtual epigrams[3] and on every page chisels some dimly felt facet of literature into the brilliance of exact expression.[4] Levin's criticism perhaps marks the highest reach criticism can attain while remaining academic. As a theorist, he is tame and fussy. As a reader, he is unsurpassably discriminating, patient and sympathetic. Although the introductory and epilogic matter concerned with reality and romance, realism and antirealism, never quite grips the great urgencies of death and sex that make unreality, as it were, so real, the heart of the book, the essays on the five classic French novelists, is solidly alive. The five chapters, in retrospect, each seem empathetically tinted with the qualities of the author discussed: the chapter on Stendhal rather crisp and diffident, the one on Flaubert slightly slow and laborious, the one on Proust meandering and ornate, the ones on Balzac and Zola miniature engines of constructive energy. I was struck especially by the enthusiasm with which Levin synopsizes and appraises the accomplishment of these last two authors, whose uniformly bound *oeuvres* certainly need a vigorous dusting. The classics stand in need of constant inventory; as an inventory, and as an incitement to reread, *The Gates of Horn* is very valuable.

The title comes from Homer: "Two gates for ghostly dreams there are: one gateway/ of honest horn, and one of ivory." Through the gates of ivory pass fantasies and illusions; through the gates of horn pass dreams that "may be borne out," that is, realistic dreams. Levin's presiding assertion, "realism presupposes an idealism to be corrected," aligns the masterpieces of the novel behind the premier exemplar, *Don Quixote*, and relates them, in France, more or less intimately to the many political disillusions between the Revolution and the First World War. By way of emphasis, a chronology at the back of the book intermingles events like "Third Republic proclaimed, after defeat of Napoleon III in Franco-Prussian War" (1870) with ones like "Proust experiences his first asthmatic attack" (1880). Such an approach has more in it of honest horn than of ivory, although as is horn it is beautifully polished and painstakingly wrought. If the novel is in essence realistic, and if "the realistic movement and the bourgeois life-style" are linked in a necessary "cohabitation," then indeed the novel may be as dead as the epic and the romance, for at least in the West social entropy has melted away the aristocrat and the peasant whose flanking contrast gave the term *bourgeois* pungency and shape. M. Homet reigns unchallenged; social distinctions no longer exist, only degrees of wealth and poverty. There does remain, revealed all the more sharply in the present lull that has settled over Western society, the great aboriginal distinction between inner and outer, between *anima* and *res;* and Professor Levin's survey, which like anything monumental has a touch of the tombstone, would seem to leave us—to his regret—with nowhere to turn but toward the gate of ivory. Prose narrative needs to refresh itself at the springs of myth and

[1] "Writing day and night, from twelve to eighteen hours out of every twenty-four, [Balzac] might well have sighed, with Eliot's Prufrock, 'I have measured out my life with coffee spoons.'" P. 162.

[2] "The names Proust dropped now glitter in a glamor reflected on them from his name and fame." Pp. 375-6.

[3] "But, where religious irony had viewed life as a dance of death, humanistic irony praised folly and popular irony glorified roguery." P. 41.

[4] "The airplane, the automobile, the telephone, the electric light, and other such mechanical inventions have become the merest routine of our daily lives; but they were the astonishing innovations of Proust's day; and his sense of wonder has estranged them anew and quickened them into tutelary divinities." Pp. 428-9.

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dream. Is this to be deplored? The contemporary attempts to shake off the heavy spell of realism, however seemingly formless and irresponsible, are a worthy phase of man's attempt to educate himself through literature.

Tract and Memoir

THE WINE IS BITTER. The United States and Latin America. *By Milton S. Eisenhower. Doubleday. $4.95.*

Reviewed by DOUGLAS M. DAVIS

Ream for ream and pound for pound no problem in the modern world has been solved more often than the Latin American problem. Indeed, it is always solved in the same way. Saving only the grand recommendations of earnest ideologues, the formula goes something like this: sweep out the fat landlords and redistribute the land; diversify the economy and graduate the income tax; build schools and hospitals; hold free and open elections; relax the social rigidities of class and caste—all of this financed in part by American dollars and guided in part by American example.

What, then, remains to be added—of the new and fresh, that is? Let us admit at once that Milton Eisenhower's *The Wine is Bitter: The United States and Latin America* enforces the notion that there is precious little. Although by nature a pragmatist and by party a Republican, Dr. Eisenhower sounds like no one so much as Robert Alexander on the urgency of social reform and John F. Kennedy on the great stakes at issue: *"Latin Americans must choose between a peaceful but revolutionary alliance for progress and bloody revolution. If they choose wrongly, it may be their last free choice."* In both tone and substance he closely follows his predecessors in the genre.

If we can bring ourselves to admit, however, that the search for the "new" and "fresh" in Latin panaceas fringes the illu-

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sory, Dr. Eisenhower's book takes on strength and significance. *The Wine is Bitter* is equal parts tract and memoir (of the author's eight-year term as Special Ambassador to the continent). It is filled, therefore, with personal reminiscence and anecdote of more than routine value. We have had quite enough of behind-the-brush interviews with bearded revolutionaries and admirable declarations in behalf of freedom and justice by young student leaders. They dot every journalistic account of Latin America known to man. We meet here instead a disgruntled finance minister whose loan application has been turned down by the World Bank, a politician who dares not tax the wealthy for fear of a "people's revolution," a harried businessman who is getting forty cents per pound of coffee where once he got a dollar.

In brief, Dr. Eisenhower succeeds in presenting to us the busy, working side of Latin America—the very side so often overlooked by the erudite on the one hand and the facile on the other. Eisenhower's continent incorporates violence and intellectual ferment, yes, but it is also a place where well-intentioned leaders struggle vainly against inflation run riot. It is a place where popular expectations make haste a virtue and planning a vice in economic policy. It is a place where beautiful hospitals are erected and then stand largely idle (for want of money to pay doctors and nurses), where factories are built without the hydroelectric power to run them. It is a place, alas, where much is beyond American control: *"It is imperative for us to realize that the success or failure of the Alliance for Progress is not wholly for us to determine."*

Yet in the face of stubborn reality, Dr. Eisenhower somehow manages to make the old conclusions seem applicable. Not perfect, not bound to succeed, but applicable:

> The United States has a crucial role in this drama. Our aid can be decisive in helping Latin Americans build better institutions, increase income, and purge injustice from their society. We must be swift and generous. . . .

It is good to have a man of such overwhelming *practical* competence say these things,

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for they reinforce the findings of those who have written from afar—and influenced recent American policy so profoundly.

This is not to say that men of Milton Eisenhower's stripe will decide the practical issues in Latin America or even affect the serious dialogue that feeds upon them in this country. He is too gray for the former and too conventional for the latter. It is no accident that his heroes are the Frondizis and the Betancourts. Honorable men all, competent men, all, but they rarely match the staying power of the Perons and Castros.

An Evolutionary Change

ASCENT OF WOMAN. *By Elisabeth Mann Borgese. Braziller. $5.*

Reviewed by LOUISE M. YOUNG

Elisabeth Mann Borgese has written by far the most provocative study of the "feminine revolution" and its "real causes" to have appeared in recent years. Beginning with a dialogue between the feminine self and not-self, she uncovers the paradoxical anxieties, doubts and ambiguities evidenced in the generally accepted belief in the justice of equal rights and responsibilities, and the prevalent but contradictory suppositions, existing in men's minds and also in women's, regarding maleness and femaleness, dominance and submission, superiority and inferiority.

A sufficiently lofty overview of the contemporary situation, however, should and can furnish a vision wide enough to resolve this paradox as mankind moves along the parellel paths of natural evolution and cultural evolution marked out by the emerging spirit. Woman's inferiority in recorded history is the result of the human species' "position on the scale of natural evolution toward individuation, and the sex balance

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resulting from this 'environment.'" But *Homo sapiens* is distinctly a member of the animal kingdom, even if he does represent the "peak of evolution"; and throughout the animal kingdom, "sex-linked inferiority is relative, conditioned and reversible."

Human history up until the nineteenth century (a mere moment as we reckon biologic time) was mainly the record of the emancipation of the individual. Some of us have held, with Lord Acton, that the emancipation of women was a chapter in this history of liberty, viewed as successive triumphs of "minorities." But not so, according to Elisabeth Borgese. The "ascent of woman" was a single aspect of a larger shift of emphasis from the individual to the collective. The rise of new forms of "collectivist" social organization in the last century heralded a new cultural synthesis of the natural trends of individuation and socialization, which has already changed and will change further the sex balance; will minimize sex differences by fostering new traits; and will produce superior women who will be in every respect men's equals. Therefore the changes in laws and customs designed to advance women's freedom are not mere concessions of chivalry and tolerance, are not antibiological and antilogical as the neo-antifeminists believe, but are collective responses to evolutionary change.

The coincident emergence of women and the displacement of the individual by the collective is no mere accident of history, but a clearly marked phase of the new synthesis. It is witness to the deep-seated affinity between the attributes called feminine and the attributes of the group acting as a collective force. This affinity has its origins in the very wellsprings of the human consciousness, and the depth of its penetration of our subconscious is traceable in myth, in language, in art, and in man's perennial dreams of an ideal state. Today it expresses itself in certain social qualities essential in a group-minded society where cooperation prevails over competition, and where socialization and collectivism have displaced individualism. In such an "other-directed"

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society as our own, where a mass culture has created a collectivist component that has largely overpowered the individualist component, the attributes of the group have tended to be "feminized." Still more is this true in such overtly collectivized societies as Russia and China, and such emergent nations as Israel and India, where the group-force is maximized. All of these countries witness very visibly to the "ascent of woman," with the minimizing of sex differentials.

This "crisis of the individual" is simply evidence of the evolutionary extension of mankind's scope. As man has expanded his reach, the individual has shrunk in importance, independence, power of control and range of knowledge. Intellectually and technologically, humanity has advanced far beyond the grasp of the individual mind. The individual consciousness is less and less able to keep pace with the complexity of happenings. The "crisis of the individual," the disorientation of sex relationships, the baffling anxieties about women's role, are closely related elements of the "human condition." The reciprocal play of natural evolution and cultural evolution has produced it; and may be counted upon to lead us out of it. After "billions of years of blind mutation, pressing against the shifting walls of their environment," the primeval organisms have emerged as man. But now we are conscious of what has happened; and how it has happened. From now on, evolution is in our hands.

Part of this book's interest inheres in the background and motivation of the author. The youngest daughter and fifth of the six gifted children of novelist Thomas Mann, she was still a schoolgirl when her father's long exile began in Zurich in 1932. Her command of several fields of science, humane letters, art and music bespeak a mind able to benefit richly from the stimulating atmosphere in the closed family group presided over by the awesome figure of the artist-father and the equally remarkable mother who, serving as her husband's impresario, amanuensis and constant companion, set a noble example of the traditional feminine role in the devotion with

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which she nurtured her husband's artistic career as well as his personal life and that of his six children. In 1939, twenty-one-year-old Elisabeth Mann married the renowned Italian poet, philosopher and historian, Giuseppe Antonio Borgese, a contemporary and friend of her father, and like her father an exile from his native land. This marriage, uniting "two great dynasties of exiled princes of the spirit" ended with Borgese's death in 1952. There were two daughters. Possibly part of Elisabeth Borgese's courageous determination to grasp a universal unity and impose an ideal pattern on the refractory material of everyday experience was "environment-conditioned," since both Borgese and Mann had a profound sense of history and of individual destiny. On the other hand, as was the case with Margaret Fuller a century ago (with whom she challenges comparison in several ways), the very urgency of her primary need to achieve individuality and moral autonomy was partly the result of the fact that her closest associations were with such formidably "realized" individuals.

"Dissatisfaction with oneself is one of the foundation stones of every real talent," wrote Thomas Mann, shortly before his death, in an essay on Chekhov. This "divine discontent" the parents of the Mann children freely encouraged, and in an environment so conditioned to release creativity, all of the daughters developed highly expressive literary abilities. The elder daughters, Erika and Monika, are authors of sensitive, revelatory memoirs. In the present volume the youngest daughter has reached a point where she can "rejoice" in her discontent. She has set her own spirit free by perceiving that "our relationships to this world are like a mathematical function that has its graph, its curve—that is beyond justice and injustice." Writing with a style in which wit and subtlety play freely, and urbanity often rises to the level of elegance, Elisabeth Mann Borgese has written an original and insightful book which will please some readers and shock others. This reviewer does not agree with all of her conclusions, but would find it captious to dwell on the points of disagreement when so many

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THE PAPER ECONOMY. *By David T. Bazelon. Random House. $6.95.*

Reviewed by ASHER B. LANS

At first glance *The Paper Economy* seems to be little more than a generously acknowledged blend of old Veblen, Berle, Galbraith and Thurman Arnold poured into new and jarringly jazzy phrases. The title itself is a nonpejorative synonym for Veblen's *Vested Interests,* or the totality of property rights that are responsible for the nonuse and misuse of productive facilities. The "idea of competition" is a "mindless notion," "a religious tenet of faith," requiring "that the evidence of one's senses be denied." Administered prices constitute taxation by large corporations (camouflaged by the nineteenth-century phraseology of property rights and free competition), the proceeds of which are expended for redundant advertising or oversized automobile fenders, rather than aid to education or urban redevelopment.

Mr. Bazelon's schema, however, both encompasses and transcends the problem of the extent to which "old theory" regarding "property" and "government" is contradicted by "new fact." Despite their own experiences in both government and business, the law professors and institutional economists, upon whose research he builds, have mostly truncated their analyses by an artificial separation of government and business.

Control of markets and capital accumulation, influence on the type and extent of technological research, power to restrict production rather than reduce prices when confronted with limits of demand make the five hundred largest corporations in-

✪ ASHER B. LANS is a practicing attorney in New York, specializing in corporate and international law. He has been a lecturer in economics at Brooklyn and Hunter Colleges.

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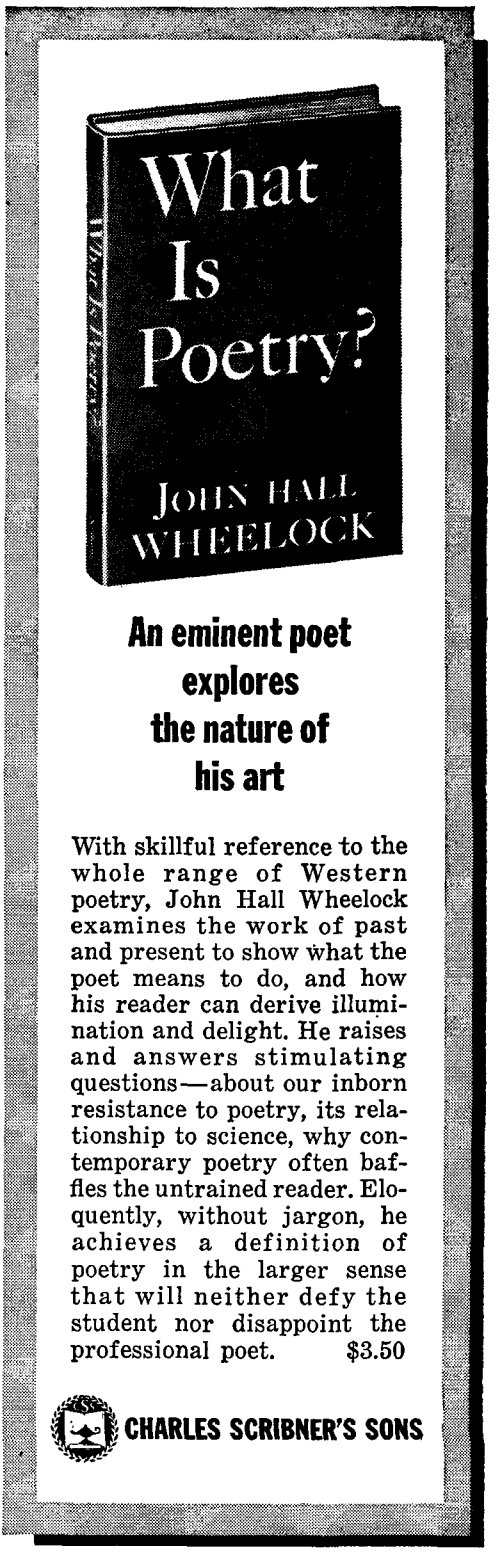
struments of private governments. It is insufficient to contend, as does Galbraith, that the freedom of action of United States Steel is limited by the countervailing competition of Big Aluminum or the power of Organized Labor. Nor is it adequate to assert with Riesman and Berle that corporate leadership increasingly considers itself as "trustees for their beneficiaries," with Boards of Directors "in the same boat with public office holders."

That the complexity and expense of modern technology make economic planning necessary and limit the scope of informed stockholder control of corporations are irreversible facts. Certain tangential aspects of the problem deserve further refinement. The antitrust program is not purely an anachronistic ritual, as Bazelon asserts, echoing Arnold. In the hands of a vigorous administrator, such as Bicks or Arnold himself, the Department of Justice, although not able to "break up Big Business" (assuming this would be desirable), can restrain certain misuses of power to protect the public interest. Moreover, while the structure of our tax and security laws (as well as the cost of capital equipment) makes it difficult for new corporate giants to grow, the postwar expansions of Monsanto, Olin Mathieson and American Motors illustrate the degree of flexibility (and, in certain areas, of price and product competition) that still characterizes many segments of the American economy.

The continuing derogation of the role of wealth by exponents of the "Managerial Revolution" is unnecessary oversimplification. No group of stockholders can threaten the management of A. T. & T., but the Milbank family overthrew the directorate of Commercial Solvents Corporation. Moreover, as indicated in Gabriel Kolko's neglected *Wealth and Power in America,* many managements have substantial stakes in their own companies as individual capitalists and others operate under the shadowy influence of large family or trust stockholdings.

Mr. Bazelon's principal thesis, however, is in my opinion unassailable. The five hundred largest corporations possess more



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power over the American economy and society than any city or state, and they share authority, in a ratio dependent upon the forcefulness of any particular President, with the Federal Government itself.

The American economy has operated at full efficiency only when an extrinsic crisis, such as the Second World War, overcame ideological disagreements to permit public and private business to work in tandem; with *ad hoc* nationwide planning we produced seventy thousand planes a year and more consumer goods than at any time in our history. Plainly, nationwide economic planning, that is intercorporate and intra-industry control, is the only probable method of actually achieving the Affluent Society and of making an adequate percentage of our resources available for those "non-profitmaking purposes" without which we can neither compete effectively with the Communists nor contribute materially to the Great Ascent of the underprivileged majority of the world.

As a form of private government, the large corporations are highly undemocratic. For there is no effective means by which their nominal owners may control self-perpetuating managements. In addition, since the presumed purpose of a business corporation is to maximize its own profit, each of these private governments may conduct its own activities without relationship to our desired national objectives.

Ultimately, therefore, we face a novel domestic political question. The problem of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was to create freedom for individuals, while giving public government power adequate to establish an effective nationwide society. The problem of the twentieth century is to coordinate the public government and the private government (the large corporations), while retaining democratic controls and maximum personal freedom in both spheres. Mr. Bazelon has no pat solutions. He has, however, performed an important public service, both by his exposition of the problem that confronts us and by his contribution to the disenthrallment with antique myths that is the necessary precursor to its resolution.

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THE READER REPLIES carries miscellaneous comments by readers and authors on various articles that have appeared in the magazine. All communications should be addressed to: The Editor, THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR, 1811 Q Street, N.W., Washington 9, D. C. Because of limitations of space, we cannot guarantee to print all letters received.
—EDITOR

The article by Carl N. Degler entitled "The American Past: An Unsuspected Obstacle in Foreign Affairs" [AS: Spring, 1963] is so completely appropriate to our current problems in Vietnam that I left my own copy of THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR with our Embassy there.

DAVID B. ARNOLD
Princeton, New Jersey

* * *

In "The Dismemberment of Orpheus" [AS: Summer, 1963], Ihab Hassan has outlined and analyzed the disaffection (in art and literature) with modern civilization. He has done it well, with a tacit support for the disaffected and a strong case for the construction of a Dionysian ego. But, strangely, in all the long essay he has not touched upon the question that so obviously projects itself.

What is it the gentlemen want? What would they have? Is life so dull and peace so repressive as to be jeopardized at the price of chaos and silence? I know not the course others may take but for me, give me civilization or give me death, although to some the two may seem synonymous.

If anthropology is read aright and if freedom from repression could be quantitatively measured, we would surely be forced to conclude that there is no more repression—no more necessity for negation of the life instincts today than was to be found in most primitive societies. Study for instance the intricate and rigid restrictions on the sex drive. Marriage customs were rigidly enforced and even where polygamy was instituted it was hedged about with customs and implicit responsibilities that placed it far from licentiousness, and it certainly showed little concern for the enforced repression and "negation of life instincts" of those males that polygamy necessarily excluded.

The Ten Commandments were primitive in origin, and murder, rapine and "coveting" were necessarily tabooed before man could live even at the tribal level.

Further, it is difficult for me to become incensed over the "police forces of so many ideologies." "The primary aim of these police forces is to exercise their control, in depth, on the instinctual impulses of man—and on the freedom of his actions."

What instinctual actions, Professor Hassan? We would be happy for some specific knowledge as to what is on their disturbed minds. True, society rests upon repressions, but repressions surely date from the time man became a social animal. The varied and brilliantly delineated viewpoints expressed in THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR alone are, for me, enough to allay the ghosts of ideological police forces. What is it the gentlemen want?

If repressions date from the time man became social, then delinquency too must be ancient in origin. A recent study showed evidence of less neuroses among juvenile delinquents in Brooklyn, New York, than among the law-abiding high school students. What can be made of this I do not know. Nothing was said of the number of psychopaths among the delinquents.

Modern society imposes its stresses and strains, but too little is said of the alternatives. The hipsters and delinquents may view conformity as a slow death. They may wish to divorce themselves from society, to exist without roots, to journey into the rebellious imperatives of the self. Such a path is surely to encourage the psychopath in oneself. Until some of the specifics of such a course are delineated, I prefer to live with my neuroses, and to hell with Dionysus.

MERWIN CRAWFORD
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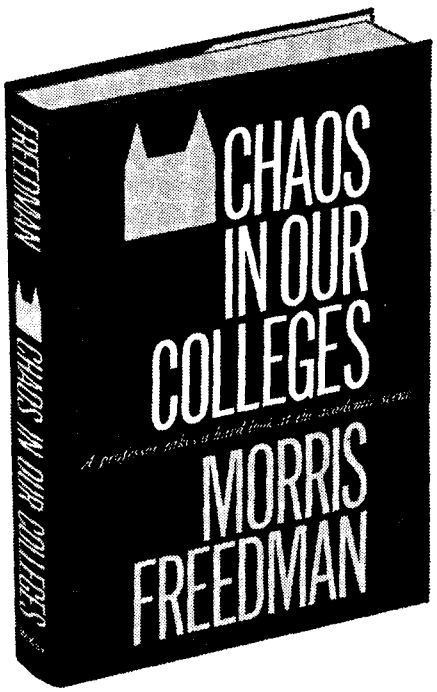

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We have chuckled and cried over Bernard Levin's "Thoughts on Our Present Discontents" [AS:Summer, 1963].

What a condensation of a decade of tragedy this is: "During the fifties, when the initiative was seized by the Soviet bloc and the West hungered for leadership from the only quarter that could have provided it, what the West got was not leadership, but golf."

Unless the President soon takes the sharp turn from brave words to courageous leadership in federating the West, some lament like Mr. Levin's may well be written during the seventies over what was once the superpower America.

MRS. CHASE S. OSBORN
Washington, D. C.

* * *

Although most of the articles in the Summer SCHOLAR are excellent, I am disturbed by Mr. Rajan's "Now Days Are Dragon-Ridden." Despite the fine language, noble thoughts and perceptive comments on Yeats's poetry, I feel the author is less than realistic in his expectations of his students and India. Certainly one does not teach students English, or any foreign language "merely to enable them to write better business letters or even to operate and service an automatic weapon." Yet it is increasingly observable that the Western cultural tradition is presently being exported largely by means of business letters, toothpaste, soft drinks, rock'n'roll and, regrettably, automatic weapons and nuclear warheads. I fear that "when a society finds its freedoms endangered" the open and receptive mind is a noble attribute, but not always a serviceable one. China has learned her Marx far better than the finer qualities of Russian literature, and India must surmount her physical problems before she can appreciate and cultivate the ideas Mr. Rajan proposes. (Frank Moraes's article in the same issue makes this appallingly clear.) Mr. Rajan's students must confront and accept present reality before they can be expected to exercise the freedoms offered by a democratic tradition.

NELSON MCEWAN
Grand Rapids, Michigan

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